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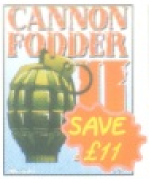

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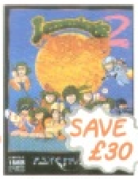

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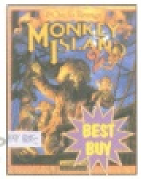

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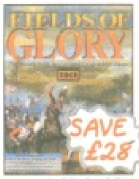

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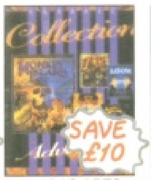

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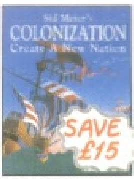

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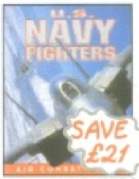

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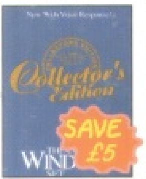

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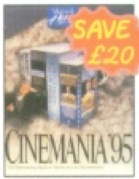

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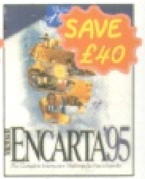

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COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF RIBBONS IN STOCK - PLEASE PHONE

Howdy, y'all! I've just jetted in from the States where I had the good fortune to attend this year's Winter Consumer Electronics Show in sunny Las Vegas. It's one of the world's biggest computer game and home electronics shows, and I've brought back exciting info on some of the hot new games you can expect to see over the next few months. My report starts on page 21...

Of course, while I was off drinking, eating and gambling too much, my loyal subjects Dean, Dave and Alex were stuck back in Blighty, busy putting together the best PC games mag in the universe. And have we got an issue for you this month! Not only do we have the first review of Heretic, but there's also a demo of it mounted on the cover!

There's a lot of great stuff in this issue, so I guess it's best if I stop babbling on about it and let you get on enjoying it! Have fun!

David Upchurch,
Editor.

WIN!
A brill 21" Sony TV, thanks to Gremlin! Turn to page 18 NOW!

6 Disks!
All the information you need to enjoy this month's excellent selection of demos can be found here.

12 News
If you want to know the latest exciting developments in the world of PC games, then this is where to come.

21 Viva Vegas!
Every January, the great and the good of the software industry convene in Vegas to party, to gamble and to show off their new PC games. Naturally, we were there too...

27 Previews
Once again we serve up a plate of near-completed games, to give you a tantalising taste of what you can expect to see on the shelves over the next few months.

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The creators of Doom and ShadowCaster have teamed up to produce a brand new kind of 3D shoot-'em-up. But is better than Doom? Find out in this, the FIRST full review!

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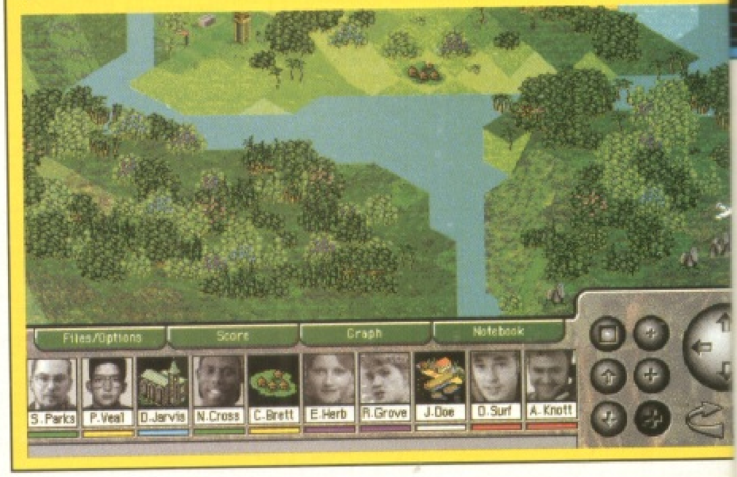
The latest in Maxis' range of smashing Sims looks set to be its best yet. We take off the wraps...



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The brilliant Id/Raven collaboration Heretic is our showcased game of the month, with Wings Of Glory, Alone In The Dark 3, KA-50 Hokum, Hell and EarthSiege also getting prime billing.

70 CD Updates
When is a CD Update not a CD Update? Er, when it's a TIE Fighter data disk, Defender Of The Empire. Well, you know, we couldn't think of anywhere else to put it...

72 Budget Reviews
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76 Yours... For Less Than A Fiver!
Apogee's Rise Of The Triad is here at last! But how does it compare to other would-be Doom-beaters like Heretic?

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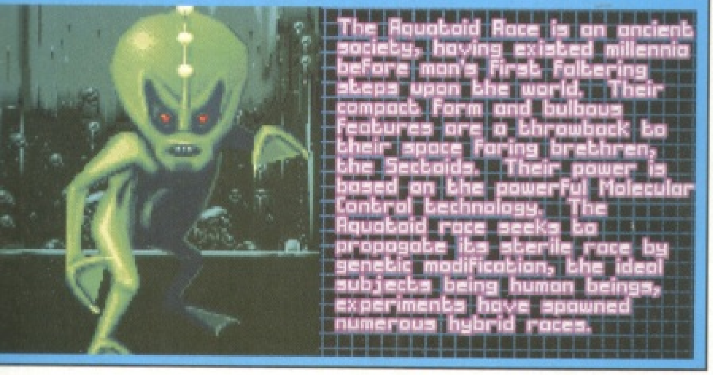
UFO 2.....................................38

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water... MicroProse unveils its superb strategy sequel!



The Aquatoid Race is an ancient society, having existed millennia before man's first faltering steps upon the world. Their compact form and bulbous features are a throwback to their space faring brethren, the Sectoids. Their power is based on the powerful Molecular Control technology. The Aquatoid race seeks to propogate its sterile race by genetic modification, the ideal subjects being human beings, experiments have spawned numerous hybrid races.

78 Power Up!

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92 Win Some Ketchup!

Really, it's true — but there's also some top Gravis kit up for grabs as well!

94 Dr Spanner

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96 The TroubleShooter

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The best part of the mag — because we don't write it!

98 Next Month!

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Disks!

You don't have to just read about Heretic, you can actually play it too thanks to this superb 9-level demo on both the HD and CD-ROM Editions of PC GAMES!

DISKS!

Blimey! How *do* we do it? It has to be said, this month's bumper treasure trove of fully-playable demos is quite simply the finest selection of PC gaming excellence ever to adorn a computer magazine! No, really.

Presented with
PC GAMES
Issue 8, March 1995.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

All of these demos will run quite happily on a 386 PC (minimum), with VGA, 4Mb of RAM, DOS 5.0 or greater and a mouse. However, please note that the King's Quest VII and Klik & Play demos need to be run under Windows 3.1 or greater, Psycho Pinball requires a 486 PC (minimum) and US Navy Fighters requires at least 6Mb of RAM to run at its best, although 4.4Mb is sufficient.

PC GAMES
Requires 256-colour VGA, 4Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 486 PC minimum.
DISK 1 Tested for ALL known viruses!
Heretic
DISK 1

It's Doom with a crossbow! Check out Id Software's newest 3D blast-fest in this stunning playable demo of Heretic. Over 9 levels of action!

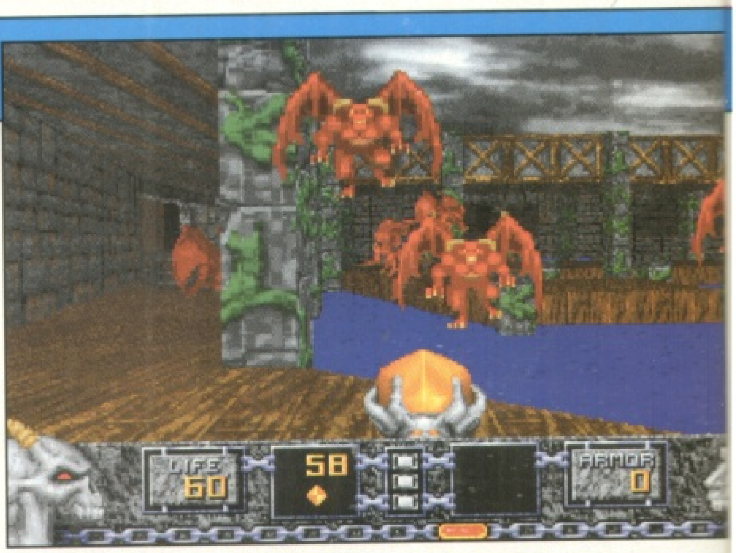
PC GAMES
Requires 256-colour VGA, 4Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 486 PC minimum.
DISK 2 Tested for ALL known viruses!
Heretic
DISK 2

Heretic

ID Software/Raven

ID Software showed us all how it should be done when they released Doom, the most popular 3D action adventure ever. Now they're back with Heretic to show all the contenders to the throne that they haven't got a *chance*.

Employing an upgraded version of the original Doom 3D engine, Heretic casts you as a magic warrior let loose in a fortress populated by all sorts of demonic creatures. To begin with, all you have is your magic staff and a spell that lets you fire small fireballs from the end of it. However, as you progress, you can collect all sorts of extra bonuses, upgrades and new weapons. Keep a look out for the Tome Of Doom!

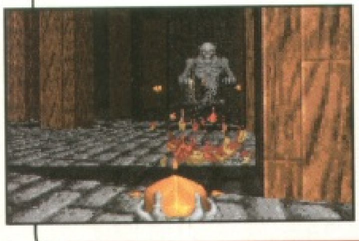

LIFE
60
58
ARMOR
0

Loading The Game...

...From The CoverCD

Place the CoverCD into your CD-ROM drive and then log onto it (by typing **D:**, or perhaps **E:**). Now enter **PCG** to load and run the PC GAMES CoverCD menu. Select Heretic with the cursor keys, and then press RETURN to install the game onto your hard drive (you'll need about 6Mb spare).

Now log onto your hard drive and go into the **C:\HERETIC** directory. Run **SETUP** to configure the game's sound settings, and then run **HERETIC** to go into the game.



Loading The Game...

...From The HD Disks

Place Disk 1 in your floppy drive, and log onto it by typing **A:** (or maybe **B:**). Now type **PCG** to load and run the menu program, and then press RETURN to select Heretic. The game will now be installed onto your hard drive.

During the install, you'll be requested to insert the last disk of the back-up set. This is Disk 2. Pop it into the drive as requested and follow the on-screen instructions to continue the installation.

Once the game has been installed, log onto your hard drive (by typing **C:**, for example) and go into the **C:\HERETIC** directory. Run **SETUP** to configure the game's sound settings, and then run **HERETIC** to go into the game.

How To Play

The game is viewed from a first-person perspective, and your aim is to find the exit for each level as quickly as possible. In your way are hidden corridors, locked doors, maze-like levels and legions of bad guys. If you've played Doom, then you'll already know the drill when it comes to finding your way around each level. If you don't, however, then here are the basic rules:

(1) Kill Everything

To shoot something, select the weapon you want to use, and then turn to face the person you are shooting at. You don't need to be directly facing them, as the game is semi-intelligent and can figure out what you are aiming at. Try to use the most powerful weapons you can, as the weaker weapons could result in you getting destroyed before you've taken out that horde of mummies.

(2) Finding Secret Doors

These are hidden in walls around the map, and become quite easy to find once you know exactly what you're looking for. Keep an eye out for things like a break in the brick pattern along a wall, for example.

(3) Opening Locked Doors

Occasionally when you try to open a door, you will hear a bump, followed by a message on-screen telling you that you need a colour-coded key to open that door. Time to go back to the drawing board, because thay key must be somewhere along the way you came.

The game is controlled with the keyboard, and uses many of the same controls as Doom. One of the main differences is the fact that you can now look up and down, as well as straight forward — something that will come in very handy on the later levels when you learn to fly!

The controls for Heretic are:

Move Forward	**Up Cursor**
Move Backward	**Down Cursor**
Turn Left	**Left Cursor**
Turn Right	**Right Cursor**
Move quickly	**SHIFT + Cursor**
Strafe	**ALT + Cursor**
Fire weapon	**CTRL**
Open door	**Spacebar**
Look Up	**Page Down**
Look Down	**DELETE**
Look Forward	**END**
Fly Up	**Page Up**
Fly Down	**INSERT**
Drop	**HOME**
Inventory	**[or]**
Select item	**ENTER**
Use	**ENTER**

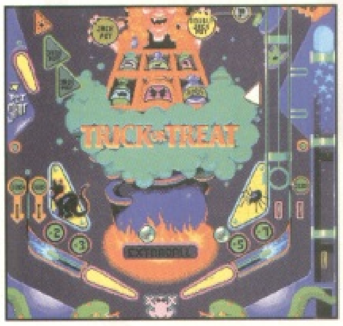
For more information on the game controls, see the Info option in the game's main menu.

Psycho Pinball

CodeMasters

The newest contender to the computer pinball crown is this conversion of the Sega Megadrive smash from Codemasters. This single table demo will show you just why this game has been so popular on other machines, and should keep you up all hours just tryng to get past that previous best score.

NOTE: Although the finished game will run on every PC, this demo requires a 486 and a Sound Blaster soundcard.



Loading The Game...

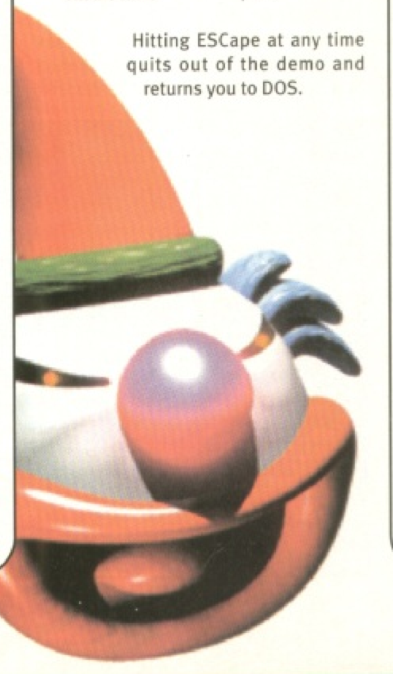
Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select Psycho Pinball with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the game.

How To Play

This is a 3 minute demo of the game, and surely you don't need any kind of explanation of how to play pinball. Just keep the steel ball away from the hole at the bottom of the screen by knocking it back with the two flippers. Aim into tunnels and pockets to gain extra points and light up bonuses. Just have fun with it! The controls are:

Left and right flippers	**SHIFT keys**
Shoot ball	**ENTER**
Tilt the table	**/ or **

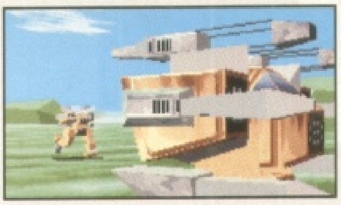
Hitting ESCape at any time quits out of the demo and returns you to DOS.



EarthSiege

Dynamix

The idea of giant robots walking the Earth is not a new one. H. G. Wells liked it, as did the creators of Battletech, but EarthSiege is one the first games to actually put you in the driver's seat of one of these enormous craft, as you battle to destroy all of your predefined targets, while retaining the use of your giant legs to get you home.



Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select EarthSiege with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the game.

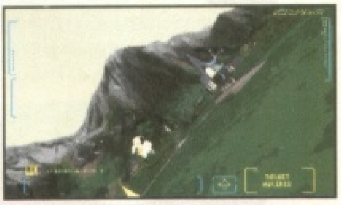
How To Play

You are a giant walking robot, and before each of the missions in the demo, you are told which targets you are to destroy. This is actually a full sim of these giant walkers, and you have a lot of options at your disposal. To see the full list of commands, check the help page in the demo.

Cyberia

Interplay

Microcosm was the first game to have pre-rendered background scrolling behind a shoot-'em-up, and Cyberia is the best looking variation on this theme yet. You pilot a fighter craft around some of the most stunning looking, but unfriendly landscapes yet, picking off targets as you go. You play the role of the gunner in this demo — you have no control over where you fly, you just pick off the targets as they appear on screen.



Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select Cyberia with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the game.

How To Play

The game is controlled with cursor keys or joystick, and all you need to do is steer the gunsight around the screen to catch the targets before you fly past them. If you fail to take out the targets, they take you out, so get blazing.

US Navy Fighters

Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts have been promising this superb combat flight sim for ages, and now we finally have a demo to show you. This single mission demo lets you take out a single fighter against a collection of enemy targets, while gawking at the stunning visuals.

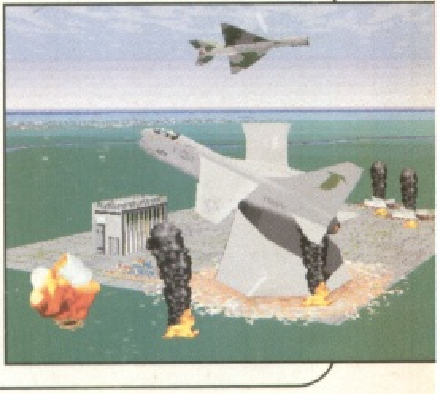
This game needs at least 6Mb to run properly. However, while it will run if you've got at least 4.4Mb of RAM, users should note that the game will not run at full speed, and they may need to switch off a lot of the texture mapping to get the game to run correctly.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the keyboard, and you can also use a Thrustmaster joystick if you have one to hand. As this is a flight sim, there are dozens of different keys to control your plane, so read the **READ.ME** document in the **USNF** directory on the CoverCD for the full instructions.

Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select US Navy Fighters with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the installation program, which will copy some vital files onto your hard drive. The installer will also tell you how compatible the game is with your machine, and what kind of performance you can expect from the game.



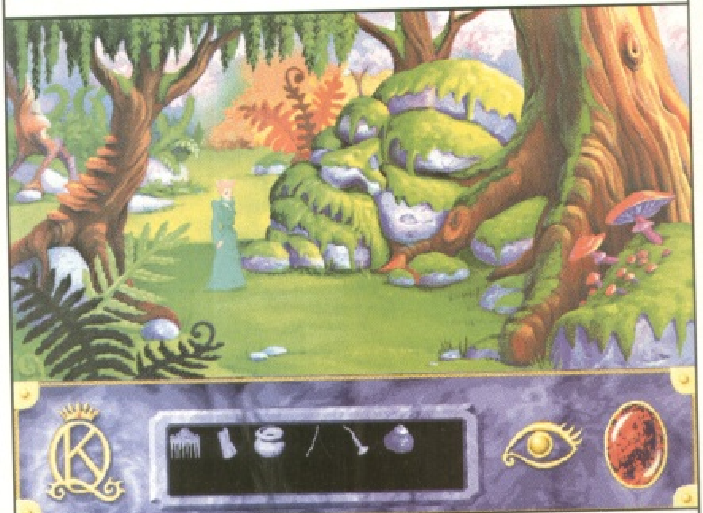
King's Quest VII

Sierra

The latest in the series of Kings Quest adventures is possibly the most adventurous (pardon the pun) to date. Moving away from the typical side-on view of most adventure games, King's Quest VII is a cartoon festival, using traditional animations and some of the best music and speech yet to create a fantasy world for you to roam around in.

Loading The Game...

King's Quest VII requires Windows to play, so you'll first need to start Windows. Then go into the File Manager, and select your CD-ROM drive. Now double click on the **SETUP.EXE** icon in the root directory on the CD, and the game will be installed to your hard disk. To run the game, just double click on the KQ7 icon in the newly-created program group.



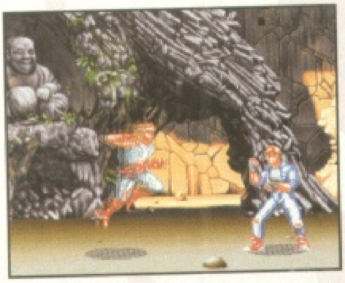
How To Play

It's an easy enough adventure game to play — just use the mouse to point-'n'-click on the objects and people you want to interact with. The point of the demo is made clear near the start, and you will learn more as you work through. We don't want to spoil it, so we'll leave you to sit back and enjoy it.

Ultimate Body Blows

Team 17

Team 17 bring their top-rated Amiga beat-'em-up to the PC, and you'll be pleased to know that it's just as playable as ever it was. To celebrate this fact, here's a fully-playable demo of the game, in which you can choose to be one of twenty different fighters, playing against the computer for victory within a certain time limit.



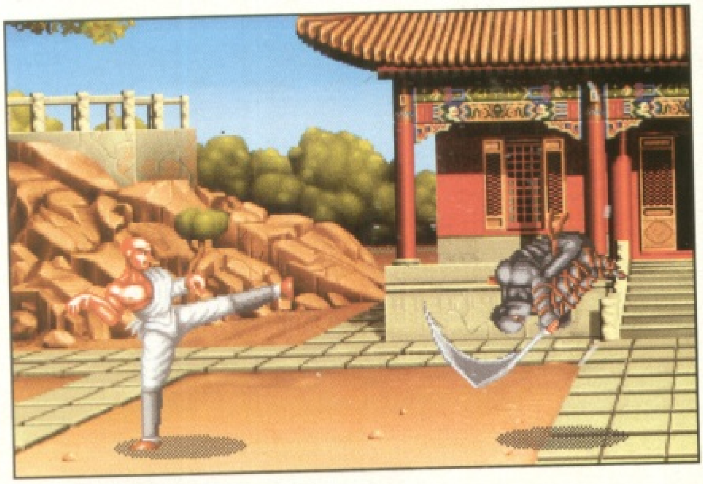
Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select Ultimate Body Blows with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the game.

How To Play

The game is controlled with either the cursor keys in tandem with the spacebar or with a joystick, and is played in much the same way as most combat games. You and your opponent begin on either side of the screen, and have to beat each other senseless as quickly as possible. Your current strength is shown as an energy bar in the top corner of the screen.

The controls change from player to player, so all we can say is that the eight joystick directions are used to move your player around the screen, and holding down the Fire button while pushing the joystick in a direction will make your on-screen character perform a combat move. Each character also has a special move, which can be performed by simply holding down the Fire button.



Scottish Open Virtual Golf

Core Design

Taking the basic form of a golf simulation as typified by PGA et al, this new Core game features a full 'virtual' rendition of the Carnoustie course, displayed in glorious texture-mapped polygons. This 9-hole demo takes you round the first half of the world famous course, giving you plenty of opportunity to practice your slice while you're at it!

Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select Virtual Golf with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the game.

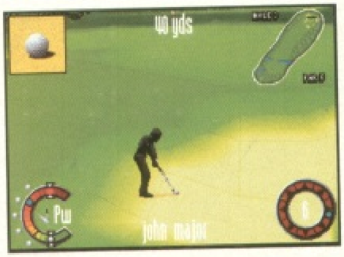
How To Play

The game is played with the mouse, and the only two things you need to look at are powermeter in the bottom left of the screen and the wind speed indicator in the bottom right.

The two dots on the power meter show the optimum strength and optimum striking point on the swing, and you have to click the mouse button when your ball swings over these points to get a straight, powerful shot.

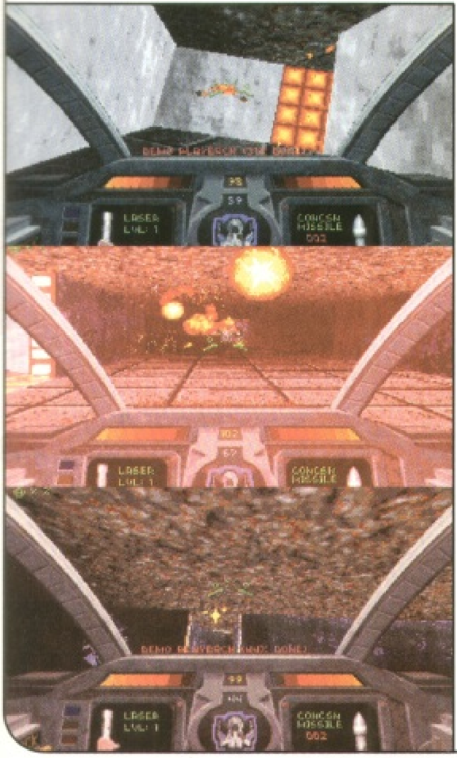
The wind indicator will show you how much slice or spin you've got to add to the ball, which you can do by clicking when your strike indicator is just left or just right of the central spot on the power indicator.

For more information on the game, press the Spacebar at any time the game is running.



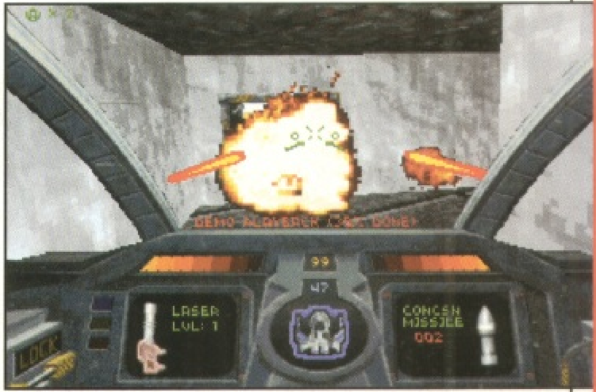
Descent
Interplay

Interplay are probably best known for their thinking games, but Descent shows that they can also turn out top-quality action games when the mood hits them. In Descent you are a lone pilot of a starfighter, sent into some enormous space mines with the aim of taking them out by destroying the core of the mine — a huge power centre guarded by dozens of sentry craft, left in the tunnels to stop any invading craft. Have you got what it takes?



Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive and type **PCG** to load and run the CoverCD menu. Then select Descent with the cursor keys and hit RETURN to run the game.



How To Play

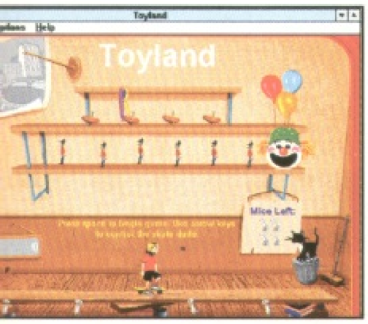
Your craft is extremely versatile, and therefore needs quite a few controls to guide it around. In essence, you always fly in the direction you are facing. However, this can get a little confusing as the exits lead every way from rooms, even up through the ceiling or down through the floor. The controls are as follows:

Change ship direction	Cursor keys
Accelerate	A
Reverse/brake	Z
Bank left	Q
Bank right	E
Fire primary weapon	CTRL
Fire secondary weapon	Spacebar
Fire flare (if carried)	F
Drop bomb (if carried)	B

Klik & Play
Europress Software

This demo of Europress Software's brand new game creator package might seem an odd thing to see on this CD. But we are a games magazine, and this is quite an important release, especially when you see what kind of a result AMOS had when it was released into the Amiga market.

This demo provides you with three full games to mess around with, allowing you to change variables and graphics to your heart's content. It should show you just what a versatile and powerful package this is.

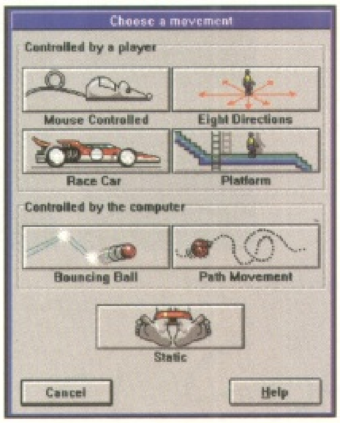


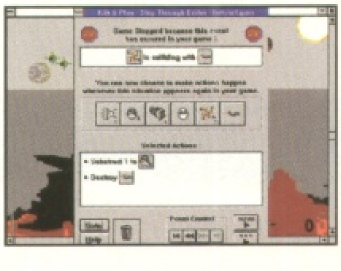
Loading The Game...

Klik & Play runs under Windows, so start up your Windows software, and then run the File Manager. Go into the **KNP** directory on the CoverCD, and then run the **SETUP.EXE** program to install the demo to your hard drive. This will also build a program group on your desktop, from which you can launch into the demo.

How To Play

Although it is a very comprehensive demo, Klik & Play has been designed with the novice game designer in mind. We don't have the room here to show you everything about how it works, but just experimenting with the various options in the menu bar should soon give you a full understanding of what Klik & Play can do. You'll find it's surprisingly easy to get into.





ALERT! ALERT!
My disk is faulty!

Due to the massive number of disks duplicated, the odd one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 7, Willow Court,
Bourton Industrial Park,
Bourton-on-the-water,
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ.

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(0451) 810788**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

Making A Boot Disk

If you're having problems running any of this month's floppy games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and within seconds you'll have a boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your PC and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

What the... HELP!

All these demos require 4Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run and both of them require at least 580K of free base memory, except where stated otherwise in the System Requirements panel on page 6. If you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems whatsoever.

● These demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software. Ignore at your peril!

The Fine Print Bit...

The PC GAMES coverdisks are rigorously checked for viruses, but coverdisks are used at the reader's own risk. PC GAMES can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by using the coverdisks.

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FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES

It's 1930

You're given £100,000 and a vast land and sea

area with numerous towns and cities.

You've got 100 years to prove yourself a

Transport Tycoon.

Set the wheels in motion.

Make it big with Transport Tycoon

AVAILABLE NOW

SET THE WHEELS

TRANSPORT TYCOON

Written and designed by

Chris Sawyer

IN MOTION

MICROPROSE

news

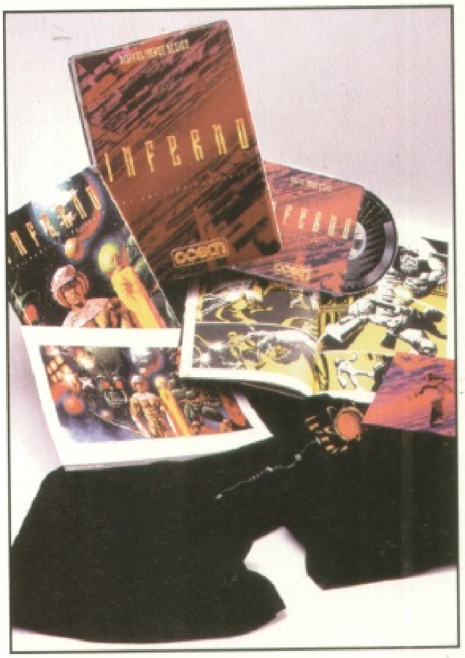
Inferno *Turns Up The Heat!*

With all the pre-release hype generated by Inferno, you would have expected it to spend a while in the news. But even we were gob-smacked by its plans for global domination.

A Collectors' Edition of DID's space classic has just been released. Coming in a rather swish tin box, this limited edition pack contains the CD-ROM version of Inferno, the comic book by Judge Dredd artist Sean Phillips, a collectors' edition mini-print of the Sean Phillips 'Inferno' illustration, an exclusive Inferno T-Shirt and an Inferno collectors' postcard - all for the very reasonable recommended retail price of £54.99. Phew or what?

News also reaches us that the floppy version will be released this month, priced £44.99. Although we haven't seen this version yet, we expect the bones of the game will remain unchanged, with only the lack of a CD soundtrack and a few cutscenes being the real difference. We'll update you on this next month.

Finally - and perhaps most strangely - is the Inferno single which will no doubt be storming up the charts by the time you read this. Inspired by the in-game music, this Alien Sex Fiend track has received some favourable reviews in the music press. Its producer, a chap called Youth, is obviously quite hip and trendy because we've never heard of him. An Inferno album will also be released this month.



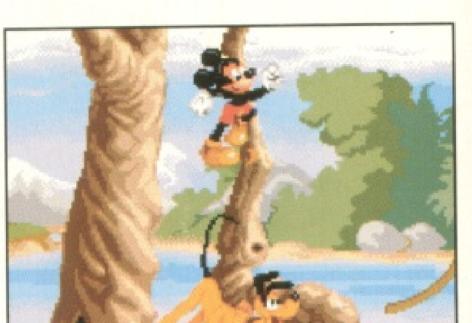
Psygnosis *Take The Mickey*

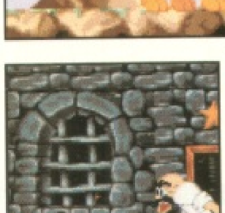
If you're a fictional big-eared rodent, it seems that you need a bus pass, incontinence pants and a faint cabbagey smell before you're allowed to appear in your own PC game. For although Mickey Mouse has been entertaining young and old alike for over 65 years, it's only now that he's been deemed mature enough to handle his very own PC title.

Mickey Mania, hailing from sunny Psygnosis, is an unashamed platformer. It breaks no new ground and has no new features to speak of, yet the console versions are so beautifully crafted that this title alone has proved there's life in the old genre yet.

Psygnosis is promising that the PC version of Mickey Mania will remain as faithful as possible to its console counterparts. This means Disney-quality animations, stacks of challenging levels — each with their own distinct themes — and guest appearances by other major cartoon stars.

The most successful and enjoyable PC platformers have been Disney licences (check out Aladdin and The Lion King, both reviewed this issue, for further proof), so there's a good chance Mickey Mania will prove to be one of the highlights of '95. Here's hoping...

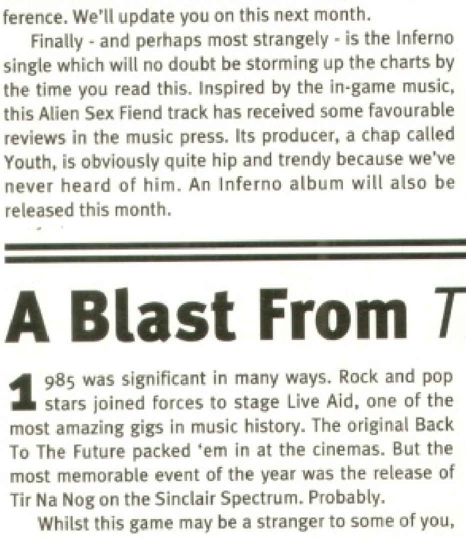




A Blast From *The Past*

1985 was significant in many ways. Rock and pop stars joined forces to stage Live Aid, one of the most amazing gigs in music history. The original Back To The Future packed 'em in at the cinemas. But the most memorable event of the year was the release of Tir Na Nog on the Sinclair Spectrum. Probably.

Whilst this game may be a stranger to some of you, it was a massive success in its day, selling well over 35,000 units — more than many titles do today. Combining the very best elements of beat-'em-up gameplay with classic puzzle solving strategy, it still remains one of the most fondly-remembered RPGs of all time.

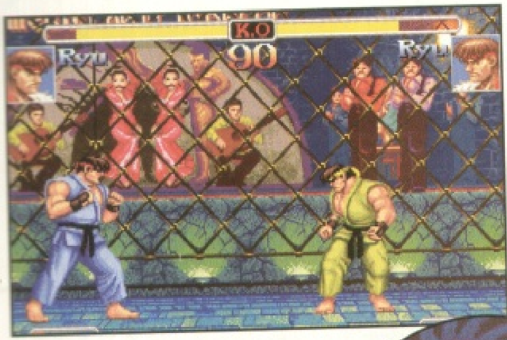


Now, some nine years later, Psygnosis is set to bring Tir Na Nog bang up to date with an all-new, all-singing, all-dancing PC version, released, if all goes well, at the end of March.

This updated version leaves the gameplay pretty much unchanged (most definitely a wise move), but dresses the whole thing up in state-of-the-art hand-painted graphics. So you can expect a plethora of puzzles to solve, tons of spells to experiment with and a massive game world to explore.

Whether this trend of converting old games to the PC will continue remains to be seen. With Tir Na Nog and Lords Of Midnight both being updated in '95, can we expect further classics such as the Ultimate titles (Knightlore, Sabre Wulf, and so on) to make an appearance? Well, we can only wait with our fingers (and toes) crossed!

Pow! **Crunch!** Bokko! **Etc!**



1995 should really be named "Year of the Beat-'em-up" or something because PC owners are set to be overwhelmed by fighting games during the next 12 months. The first heavyweight into the ring will be US Gold's Super Street Fighter II, a souped-up, polished and — indeed — 'super' version of the original coin-op smash.

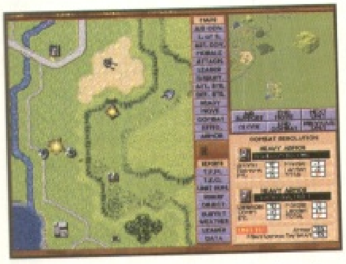
Hi-Tech has been charged with the unenviable task of cramming the new fighters (four in total), new moves and new battle modes into our favourite computer. Among the new combatants appearing on your screens will be Cammy, the British fighter who is in our opinion the sexiest computer sprite ever created. Just the sight of her muscley thighs is enough to send us rushing to the toilet!

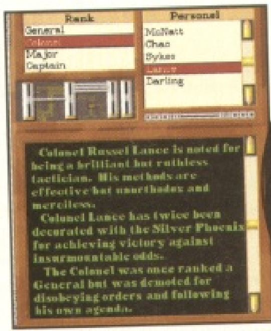
Little has been seen of this potentially mind-blowing beat-'em-up, but the console versions managed to retain the coin-op's carefully crafted playability, so there's no reason why the PC incarnation should be any different.

Also, in a move to out-trump US Gold, GameTek has announced it has the rights to Super Street Fighter II Turbo, and will be releasing the game at the same time as the 'un-Turbo' version. The differences in quality between the two incarnations are yet to be seen, but this fierce competition can only be good news for us PC owners who'll be able to pick the best of the two.

Worth a mention is the forthcoming Street Fighter movie in which an equally saucy starlet, the revitalised Kyle Minogue, plays Cammy. Apparently, though, according to those who've already seen the movie, this alone can't save the thing from being very poor indeed.

Now It's ***War*** Impressions!





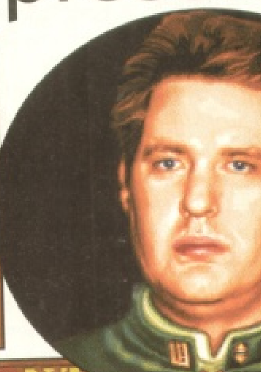
Rank
General
Colonel
Major
Captain

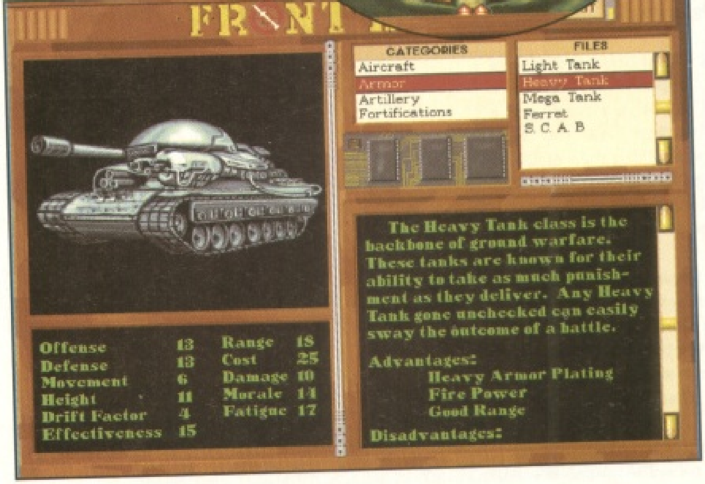
Personal
McNatt
Chao
Sykes
Lance
Darling

Colonel Russel Lance is noted for being a brilliant but ruthless tactician. His methods are effective but unorthodox and merciless.

Colonel Lance has twice been decorated with the Silver Phoenix for achieving victory against insurmountable odds.

The Colonel was once ranked a General but was demoted for disobeying orders and following his own agenda.





CATEGORIES
Aircraft
Armor
Artillery
Fortifications

FILES
Light Tank
Heavy Tank
Mega Tank
Ferret
S.C.A.B

Offense	13	Range	18
Defense	13	Cost	25
Movement	6	Damage	10
Height	11	Morale	14
Drift Factor	4	Fatigue	17
Effectiveness	15		

The Heavy Tank class is the backbone of ground warfare. These tanks are known for their ability to take as much punishment as they deliver. Any Heavy Tank gone unchecked can easily sway the outcome of a battle.

Advantages:
Heavy Armor Plating
Fire Power
Good Range

Disadvantages:

Front Lines, Impressions' forthcoming futuristic tactical wargame, places you in control of a vast army which has to fend off the attentions of a power-grabbing military might.

Set in the year 2040, you must struggle for victory using a variety of futuristic vehicles. And although there are enough different scenarios to keep even the most experienced wargamer occupied for ages, the game also includes a mission builder so the fun is quite literally endless.

Impressions is obviously quite chuffed with its efforts, going so far as to declare Front Lines "the best looking and most enjoyable tactical war game yet" which, when you consider the developer's previous efforts, should bode well. You'll be able to find out exactly how ace Front Lines is when we cast our oh-so-critical eyes over it in next month's issue.

Team **Talk**

Who are the geezas who write PC GAMES? And just what or who has taken their fancy this month? All is revealed below...

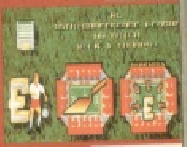
David Upchurch

Editor

Dave liked The Lion King, and annoyed the rest of the PC GAMES' crew by singing "Hakuna Matata" at the top of his voice. "The bit where Pumbaa eats all the bugs is gross," he admitted, before gulping down the hairy remains of a mouldy banana and horseradish sauce sandwich.

Dean Evans

Assistant Editor



Even though Alex was given the task of previewing Gremlin's Premier Manager 3, it's Deano who has slipped on his stained green parka and thick-rimmed specs to assume control of Accrington Stanley FC. "I like reading all those exciting statistics," dribbled Dean, before being dragged back to his padded cell.

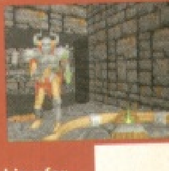
Alex Simmons

Staff Writer

"I thought Aladdin was really smart", said straight-faced Alex. "I haven't played a decent platform game in ages so it made a nice change from those tedious strategy things." Hmm, no doubt Alex will be looking to move across on to PC GAMES' sister mag, Arcade Review Weekly, in the near future.

David Kelsall

Art Editor



"I like Heretic 'cos it's got loads of good monsters in it, And stuff." exclaimed PC GAMES' chimp-like art-guy, Davey boy K, while admiring the latest masterpiece from the creative genius of Simon Bisley. Dave added: "What I'm really looking forward to though is Dark Forces - I saw the demo and it looks amazing."

I am Imp — hear my name and tremble, oh pathetic mortals. From the very depths of Hell I have ventured forth once again, to wreak havoc on the software industry with such probing questions as...

"Whatever happened to Originality?"

I've been around for eternity, torturing souls and playing on my PC. And in that time I've witnessed computer games evolve from crude little programs to the huge multimedia-style epics we've come to regard as 'the norm'. Throughout this time, one thing has remained consistent: programmers everywhere have always tried to be innovative. Over the years, new genres have been invented single-handedly by certain games. Populous, for instance, was responsible for starting the 'God game' genre, whilst Lemmings was almost impossible to pigeonhole.

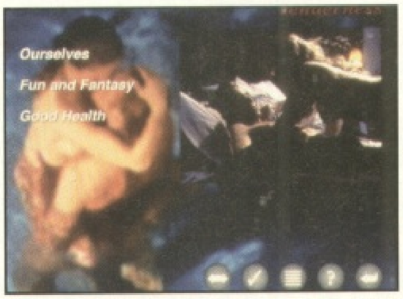
But these days, programmers no longer seem to strive for originality, relying instead on ideas from the past. If a game is even remotely successful, you can bet that a sequel will follow shortly. And while in most cases this is no bad thing (the latest Wing Commander is arguably the best of the bunch), I'm sure I'm not alone in wishing for a more varied diet of PC games. In some instances, programming teams have already begun work on the sequel before they've even finished the first game, which is hardly fair on you, the punter. After all, why should you have to fork out twice for what is in effect the same game implemented in the way it should have been in the first place?

Frontier: First Encounters, Syndicate 2, Civilization II, Alone In The Dark 3, Formula One Grand Prix 2 - all follow-ups to undeniably classic games, and all due for release in '95. But wouldn't you rather that David Braben worked on a totally new space epic, one not held back by the constraints of Frontier? That Bullfrog spent time on an innovative new shoot-'em-up, the likes of which has never been seen before? That Sid Meier allocated a year or two more to his next project in order to perfect another, totally different masterpiece? That Infogrames showcased the technology that will be used in the 'next generation' of AITD games, rather than pumping out a game that is essentially the original Alone In The Dark with different levels and a slightly better interface...? I think you get the idea.

Of course, the stark truth of the matter is that these sequels are relatively easy money for the software companies. Not too much time has to go into the development if you've already got a decent game engine, and with only a few new ideas you could quite literally go on releasing what are essentially data disks for ever. But as All New World Of Lemmings has shown, the public can get tired of having the same game forced down their throats until they puke it back up all over their shirts, tarnishing the reputation of a once-brilliant game.

I'm not implying for one minute that these titles will be crap when they're finally finished - indeed, I'm sure that Frontier: First Encounters will be the game the original should have been. But if this is the case then there's a chance that in the future the likes of you and I won't bother buying a new game such as Magic Carpet or Ecstatica. After all, what's the point? Their inevitable sequels will probably be miles better.

● What do you think of Imp's ravings? Write in and tell us at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. By the way, Imp's opinions are all his own, and in no way reflect those of PC GAMES or its publishers.



Sexcellent!

When you receive a press release with the headline "The Joy Of Sex on CD-ROM", you're going to be more than a little interested. After all, what is the joy of sex on CD-ROM? Surely the small silver disc will leave dents in your loved one's bottom? Perhaps we're a little old fashioned, but we strongly recommend sexual intercourse on a bed with the lights off and your socks on.

The Joy Of Sex — the best-selling book — has sold well over 14 million copies since it was first published back in 1972, which gives you some indication of how interested the public are in doing 'it' correctly. The subsequent videos, which a friend told me are really quite rude, sold in equal numbers and redefined the word 'educational'.

And now it's the turn of PC owners to be taught how to 'love' someone correctly. Published by Phillips, The Joy Of Sex comes complete with four on-line guides which 'take' you through the act of horrid unpleasantness. There's the insatiable young man who thinks he knows it all, the young woman looking for a new 'spark' in her life (matches and petrol strictly optional), the indifferent older man who thinks he's beyond sex, and the mature woman who's rediscovering passion.

Unfortunately we've yet to see a copy of the program, but Big Dave has pulled rank and has bagged the first look. If you want to 'join' him (Erghh, what a horrible thought!) then take a hefty 40 quid down to your nearest computer stockist now.

The Most Expensive Frog *Ever?*

It seems that the marketing and publishing relationship between Electronic Arts and Bullfrog just wasn't enough for EA. It wanted more — so much more, in fact, that it's reputedly shelled out a whopping £40 million to buy the Guildford-based developer outright.

At the time of going to press, the details were yet to be confirmed. Whether Bullfrog will remain free to get on with whatever it wants without much input from EA has yet to be announced, but we'll be bringing you a full report next issue.

Lotts Of Fun

Although the National Lottery is still in its infancy, we at PC GAMES think it's mainly a load of crap - we've collectively spent about 40 quid and the closest anyone's come is two correct numbers. Still, we're rolling in cash so the odd £10 million or so isn't exactly missed.

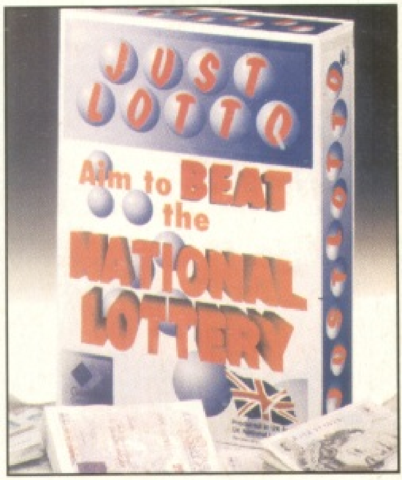
But you poor people may be interested in Justlotto which, the makers claim, can increase your chances of raking in the cash and appearing on the cover of the News Of The World.

Justlotto's programmer analysed many lotteries throughout the world and deduced that randomly selecting your numbers will lead to only two or three small wins a year. Justlotto will reduce the odds from 14 million-to-one to, erm... something smaller. Apparently.

It does this by making a "decent" guess at six numbers, which may or may not lead to any wins. After a few weeks, the numbers are analyzed, washed and brushed as the program works out how often the balls are drawn.

"At £19.99, Justlotto provides an affordable, scientific approach to playing the Lottery," says Brian Williams, Cosmi's UK Managing Director, "and it's an excellent opportunity for users to have some fun with the National Lottery."

In a shock move, PC GAMES has announced plans to release a special guide entitled 'Win The Lottery — Guaranteed' which reveals how, by spending a mere £14 million pounds, you can be guaranteed to win the Lottery.

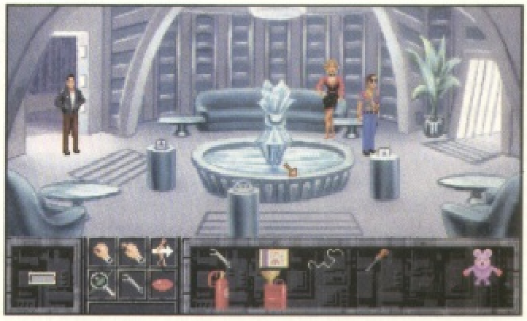


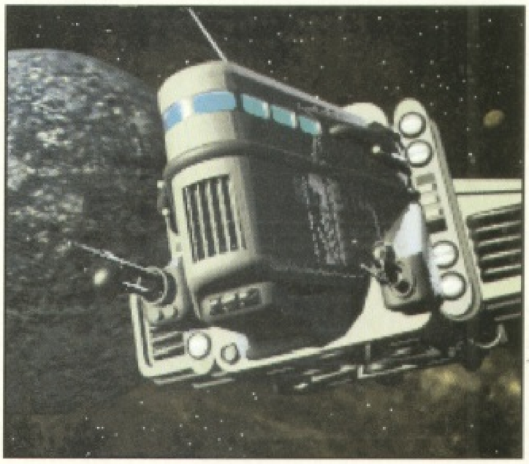
Jack's **Back In The Box**

Having survived his run-in with the intergalactic taxman in Innocent Until Caught, Jack T. Ladd finds himself in yet more trouble in Guilty, the sequel to Psynosis's graphic adventure. This time, though, he's not alone. The man-hating policewoman Ysanne keeps a close eye on our hero — and you can play as either!

Yes, Guilty will be two games in one. First, you can play as Jack and try and give Ysanne the slip, and then you can play as Ysanne, whose goal is to halt an alien invasion. Both adventures use the same locations more or less, but fresh puzzles are introduced thanks to the two characters' varying abilities.

Divide By Zero is once again behind this adventure, so we can expect a top-notch job when Guilty is released this month. And — yes! — we'll have a full review next issue.





Free The **Domark** Three

Domark is preparing itself for an extremely hectic start to '95 with the imminent release of three brand new PC games.

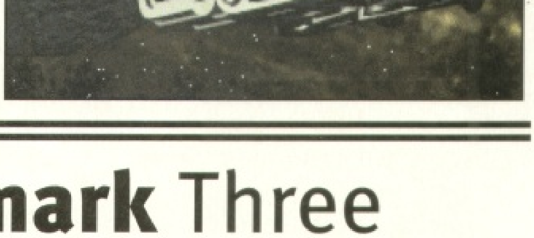
First up is The Orion Conspiracy, a graphic adventure from Divide By Zero (which must be one of the busiest development teams around at the moment). Set on a small research station located close to a black hole, you play Delvin Marshall, an ordinary man whose son has recently passed away. At the memorial service you discover, to your horror, that things aren't quite what they seem to be and that your boy was in fact murdered. Thus some cunning detective work is the order of the day.

Coming on CD-ROM only, The Orion Conspiracy features speech throughout and is presented entirely in SVGA mode — the first for a graphic adventure. An easy to use point-and-click interface is promised, and the adventure will contain so many twists and turns that you'll probably throw-up.

Next is Absolute Zero, a space simulation in which you get to play each sides of the two warring parties. Set in the 23rd Century, you must first battle against an alien army and then replay the action, this time through the eyes of the race you were just fighting. It all sounds terribly complicated, but this could be one of the more original releases of the year.

Finally, Tank Commander promises to be the ultimate tank simulation with loads of FMV sequences and texture-mapped landscapes. Over ten man-years have been spent modelling the tanks, making this one of the most accurate game of its kind.

These three games are all pencilled in for a March release and have already placed their towels over some of next issue's preview slots.



PLAYING
FOR
FUN
IS OVER

THE SCOTTISH OPEN

V·I·R·T·U·A·L·G·O·L·F

CHARTS

Top 10 PC Games

1. **The Lion King**
VIE

2. **Doom 2**
VIE

3. **Aladdin**
VIE

4. **Transport Tycoon**
MicroProse

5. **Sim City 2000**
Maxis

6. **Master Of Magic**
MicroProse

7. **Warcraft**
Interplay

8. **Colonization**
MicroProse

9. **Cannon Fodder 2**
VIE

10. **Dawn Patrol**
Empire

Top 5 CD-ROM Games

1. **Wing Commander 3**
Electronic Arts

2. **Little Big Adventure**
Electronic Arts

3. **Magic Carpet**
Electronic Arts

4. **US Navy Fighters**
Electronic Arts

5. **Voyeur**
Interplay

Top 5 PC Budget Games

1. **Formula 1 Grand Prix**
PowerPlus

2. **Out Run**
Kixx

3. **Dune 2**
The Hit Squad

4. **Monkey Island 2**
Kixx XL

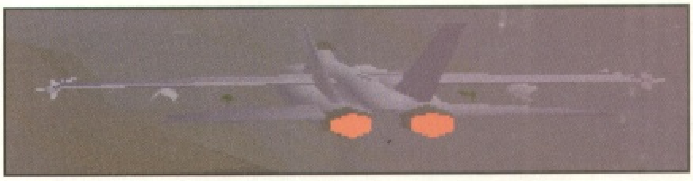
5. **Indiana Jones III**
Kixx

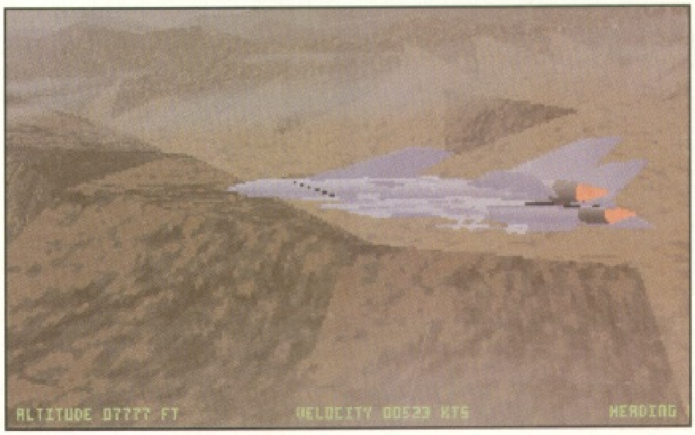
Caps Off To **Psygnosis!**

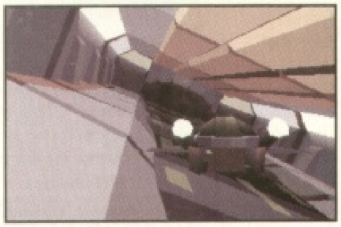
It's recently been revealed that Psygnosis has been quietly converting one of its most critically-acclaimed Amiga flight sims to the PC. Combat Air Patrol, which our sister magazine The One awarded 90% a year or so ago, will be released at the end of March.

Okay, so there may be more than enough flight sims buzzing around the PC sky at the moment, but we're particularly excited about CAP because it leans more towards the action side of things than many oh-so-realistic plane games. Indeed, the essential information needed to learn how to fly both aircraft featured in the game takes up only a few pages of the CAP's manual, giving some indication of how intuitive it all is.

But this isn't a direct conversion as such. Combat Air Patrol on the Amiga used simple flat polygons to portray the action, whereas us sophisticated PC owners will be treated to 3D routines featuring fast-moving texture-mapped polygons. The missions are also being tweaked to give them the depth necessary to compete with other modern flight sims.



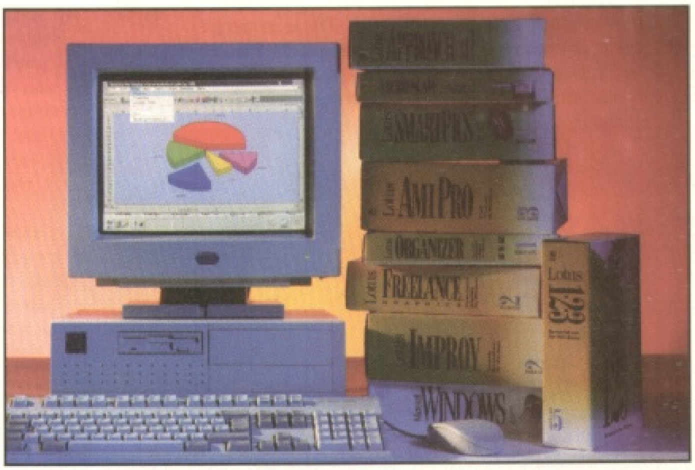




Bargain *Basement*

Haven't got a PC? Then what the flip are you reading PC GAMES for? Perhaps it's best to rectify this situation by splashing out on this pocket-gratifyingly priced 50MHz 486 DX2 system from MJN Technology which will set you back a mere £798. Or a mini-tower version which costs about a quid more.

Both 486D2-50s come complete with 4Mb of RAM, 340Mb hard drives and 32-bit VESA local bus graphics as standard. On top of this, over £1,000's worth of applications are included. Contact MJM on (01282) 777555.



Darker Forces

It's only March — yet Psygnosis is declaring that its forthcoming 3D shoot-'em-up Darker "could just become one of the largest PC games of the year." Considering the calibre of its other releases (see just about every other News story this month), this is a very bold claim. Could it really be true?

Set on Orbic, a planet with one hemisphere permanently bathed in light, the other permanently swathed in darkness, Darker is a futuristic, multi-level blaster with Doom-style gameplay. Psygnosis is promising beautifully rendered graphics that allow complete interaction between sprites and scenery, intuitive controls that give an authentic free-flight feel, a thumping 3D wraparound soundtrack (?), and states that "if you cut this baby open it bleeds gameplay" (? — again).

Still, we'll have to wait until March to see what the Liverpool-based software giant has up its corporate sleeves. Let's hope it's not just a big hairy, pair of arms, eh?

Stop Press!

Well, we haven't actually stopped the press exactly, but news has just reached us that Warner Interactive Entertainment has snapped up yet another software giant to sit alongside Renegade, which was bought by the media giant a couple of months back.

Accolade, which was most recent responsible for Hardball 4, is rumoured to have been bought by WIE for an as yet an undisclosed price. What this means for PC gamers isn't yet clear — more news next ish.

INFO BULLETS

○ Due for release within the next month is Titus' Lamborghini American challenge, a conversion of last year's successful Amiga racer. Mixing gambling, law-breaking and driving high performance cars very fast indeed, the game features a large number of tracks with various hazards to avoid. One for joyriders everywhere, we feel.

○ Also emerging from the Titus stable (or should that be hutch?) is Quik The Thunder Rabbit, a conversion of a so-so Amiga platformer with a puke-inducingly cute rabbit taking the lead role. The Amiga version didn't exactly break new ground, but it played okay-ish, if you like brainless romps of the non-taxing variety. We're keeping an open mind for the PC version, of course.

○ The operator of 'Krypt' bulletin board has been fined £500 and had over £3,000 of computer equipment confiscated following a raid initiated by the Crime Unit of ELSPA, the European Leisure Software Publishers Association. The reason for this? He was one of those pirate fellows, which once again proves that crime doesn't pay — it costs about £3,500.

○ MicroProse has followed Maxis's lead and released a playable demo of one of its games commercially. A CD demo of Star Trek: The Next Generation is in the shops now, priced at a mere £3.99. Interestingly, the Sim City 2000 demo released into the shops last year was such a hit that it topped the budget charts for many a week.

○ In this new era of putting an age rating on everything, the latest revelations from ELSPA will no doubt come as good news to those clean-living fellows who like a bit of family fun. ELSPA has just announced that 80 percent of computer games rated since February 1994 have been classed as suitable for all. Presumably, with the likes of Doom II and Ecstatica doing the rounds, next year's figures will prove very different indeed.

○ Telstar is releasing two more CD-ROM double packs this month — and the only problem will be deciding which one to buy. First up comes Alone In The Dark and Shadow Of The Comet, which is well worth a look. But perhaps best of all is Cannon Fodder and Beneath A Steel Sky, which sees Sensible Software's excellent shoot-'em-up available on CD for the first time ever. The packs are priced £39.99 and £49.99 respectively...

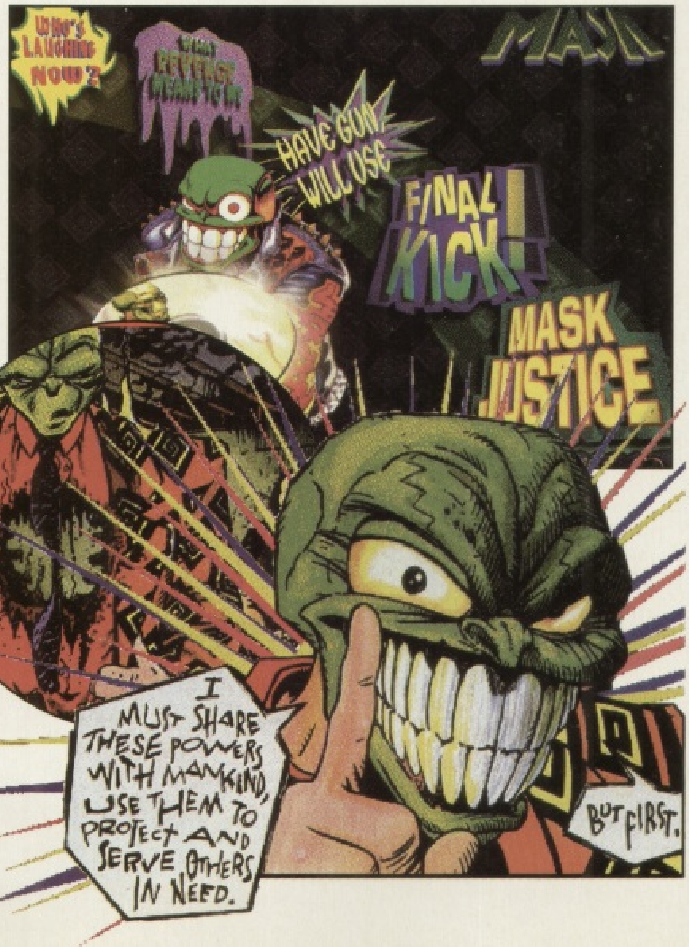
"Smokin'"!

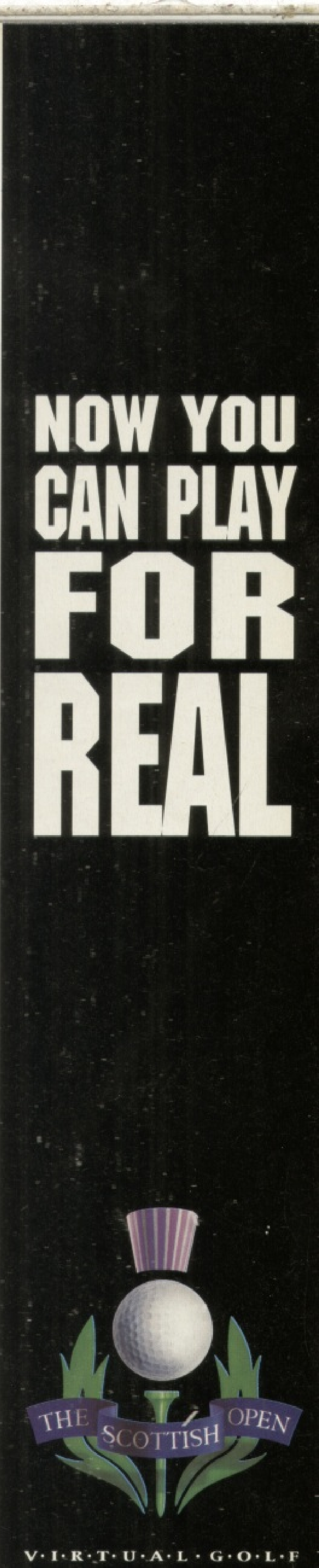
One of the more watchable movies of last year was The Mask in which rubber-lipped Jim Carrey played a half-man, half-cartoon superhero. And while PC owners won't be able to play the game of the film (strictly console fodder only, we're afraid), they will be able to interact with the film's inspiration — the original comic around which it was based.

Published by Activision, The Mask: The Origin is a compilation of the original five Mask comics, featuring over two hours of original music, animation, dialogue and loads of QuickTime movies.

Don't think for one minute that this is a quick cash-in on the film's success. "It's not like a game, cartoon or movie," says Frank Evans, President of Cyber Comics, the developer of the package. "We've come up with something completely different, combining original art, animation and sound effects to take the user on a wild adventure which can be followed in a linear or non-linear fashion."

Sadly, The Mask: The Origin doesn't include nudey shots of Carmen Diaz.


WHO'S LAUGHING NOW?
WHAT REVENGE MEANS TO ME
MASK
HAVE GUN WILL USE
FINAL KICK!
MASK JUSTICE
I MUST SHARE THESE POWERS WITH MANKIND, USE THEM TO PROTECT AND SERVE OTHERS IN NEED.
BUT FIRST.



WIN

A Smashing Sony TV!

PLUS! The winner and five runners-up will each get a copy of Retribution on floppy or CD, all thanks to gorgeous Gremlin!

Gremlin is so thrilled by the success of Retribution, its topper 3D space combat game, that it's decided to offer a brilliant 21" Sony colour TV as the prize in this excellent compo! And as if that wasn't enough, the winner of the telly will also receive a copy of Retribution on floppy or CD, as will five lucky runners-up!

Normally in these compos there's some sort of tenuous link between the game and the prize, but try as we might we can't think of one in this case. Perhaps the Krellans, the baddies in Retribution, are all chronic telly addicts. Or something. It doesn't really matter, though — it's a great prize anyway.

HOW TO ENTER

Yes, you guessed it — it's another 'multiple-choice questions' affair. Bear with us, because one day we'll have an original idea for a compo.

But until that happy day, examine the three questions below, then write the answers for them down on the back of a postcard or sealed enevelope. For example, if you think the answer to Question 1 is (b) Gremlin Graphics, then write 1 (b) on your entry.

Now add your name, address and whether you'd like Retribution on floppy or CD to your entry, and send it to us at: Not Another Bloody Multiple Choice Question Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Your entries must reach us by the 2nd of March 1995, when the winner will be selected by a process too secret to divulge here.

THE QUESTIONS

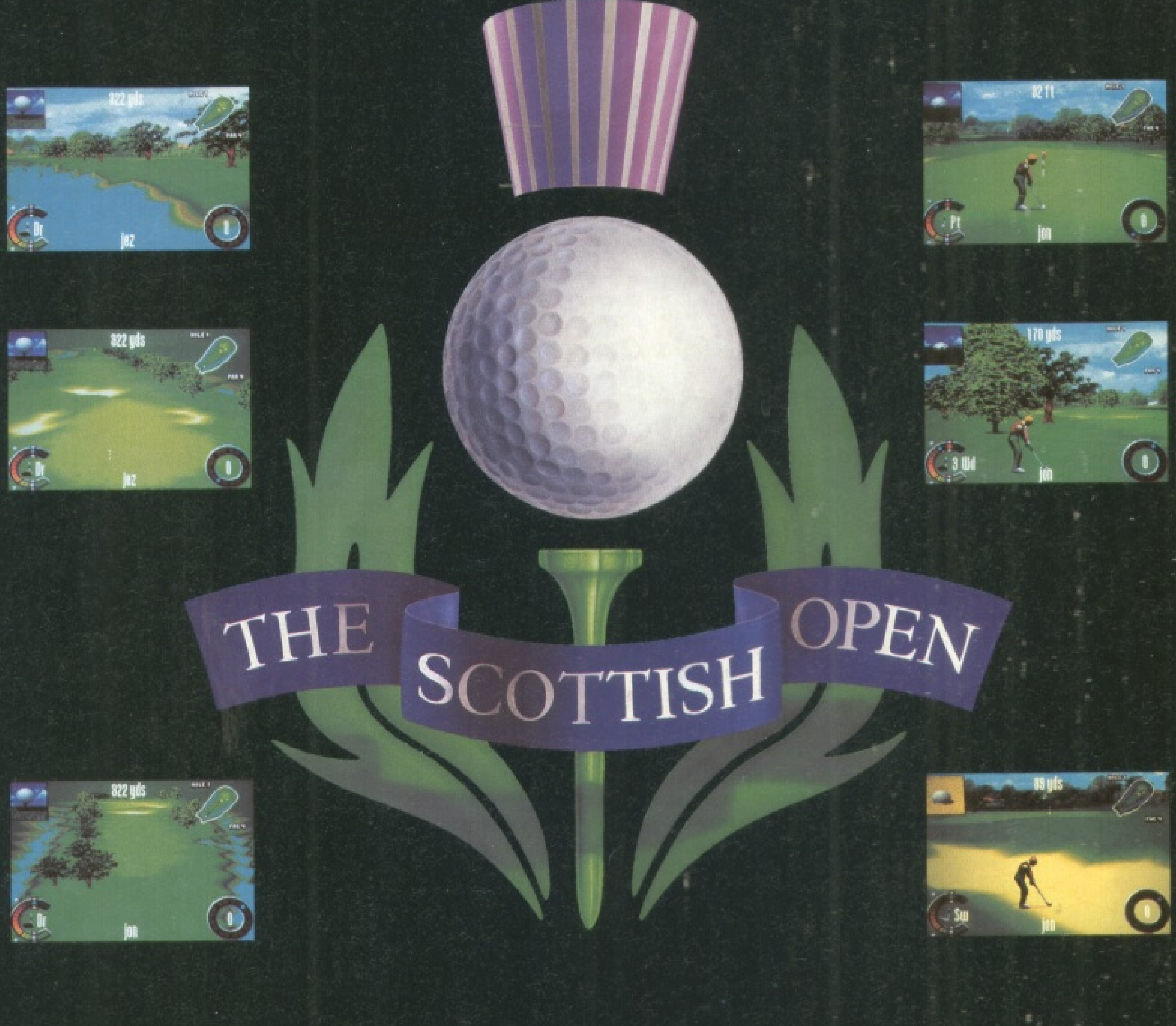
1. What is Gremlin's 'proper' name?
   (a) Gremlin Interactive
   (b) Gremlin Graphics
   (c) Gremlin A-Go-Go

2. What's the name of the team who developed Retribution?
   (a) The Bitmap Brothers
   (b) Bullfrog
   (c) Astros Productions

3. What does 'retribution' mean?
   (a) Ceding back of ceded territory.
   (b) Turned up (of nose).
   (c) Recompense for ill deeds.

THE SMALL PRINT Only one entry per household. This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or their friends. The competition closes on the 2nd of March 1995, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. While every care is taken, we cannot accept any responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post.

AT LAST...
VIRTUALLY PERFECT GOLF


322 yds
jez
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822 yds
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92 ft
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170 yds
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89 yds
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THE SCOTTISH OPEN

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WITHOUT BEING TOO MODEST, MEAN MACHINES SEGA IS THE HOME OF THE EXCLUSIVE. IT'S FIRST FOR NEWS, PREVIEWS, REVIEWS AND GOSSIP — EVERYTHING THE DISCERNING SEGA OWNER NEEDS, IN FACT. GET THE COMPLETE GAMING PICTURE — GET MEAN MACHINES SEGA...
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MEAN
MACHINES
SEGA

viva VEGAS!

This year's Winter Consumer Electronics Show took place on the 6th-9th January 1995 in Las Vegas. It's one of the largest gatherings of the software publishing community in the world, and so David Upchurch — the lucky git — was duly sent to bring back this on-the-spot report...

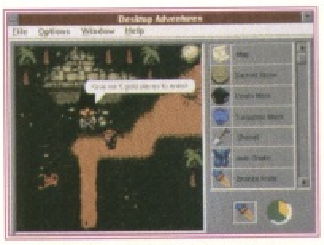
It hardly ever rains in Las Vegas, gambling capital of the United States and home to the Winter Consumer Electronics Show. But it literally lashed it down this year, soaking gamblers and show-goers alike to the bone.

In a way, it was quite symbolic. Despite putting on a brave face, there was no escaping the fact that, for the console boys anyway, last Christmas was something of a washout. Only a few key titles — Donkey Kong Country and FIFA '95, to name but two — did anywhere near as well as expected, so it was almost inevitable that everyone was proclaiming the PC as the saviour of the software industry.

THE BIG BOYS

Even so, most of the major software companies had only a handful of never-before-seen in-development titles on show. Nearly all, it seemed, were keeping their powder dry for the Electronic Entertainment Expo (or E3, as the hip cats are calling it) which takes place this May in Los Angeles. The attraction is that E3 is devoted solely to interactive entertainment — unlike the CES, which covers a wide range of consumer electronics from TV to hi-fi and beyond.

Most notable absentees from the show were Electronic Arts, Origin and Id Software (who many had hoped would be previewing Quake, the 'real' sequel to Doom), all of whom weren't exhibiting *at all*.

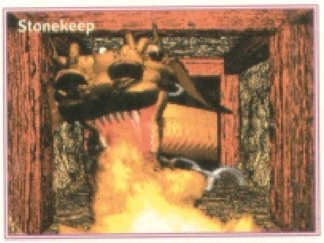


LucasArts, normally bubbling over with new stuff, had only one new game on show — Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures, a Zelda-style Windows game in which the player guides a cutesy Indy around a scrolling top-viewed map, battling baddies and solving puzzles in a race to find a long, lost treasure.

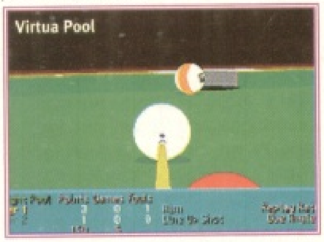
Each scenario, randomly generated each time you play by LucasArts' new World Generator engine, can be solved in under an hour, and this makes Desktop Adventures perfect for office-bound Indy wannabes to play during their lunchbreaks.

"Traditionally, desktop games for Windows have been along the lines of word, board or very abstract games," says Hal Barwood, the game's project leader. "Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures is for people who like adventure games, but don't always have forty hours free to finish one. Each game can be won in under an hour and then a new game, with new characters, puzzles and treasures, can be started."

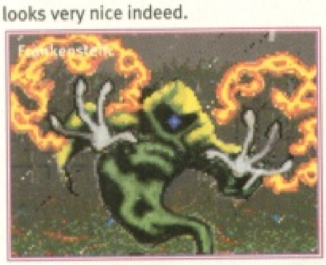
Interestingly, while the stunning Dark Forces and the equally amazing Full Throttle were in full view, there was no sign of The Dig, LucasArts' long-awaited graphic adventure created in collaboration with Steven Spielberg. However, LucasArts did provide ten reasons for The Dig's absence via a humorous press release, including "George [Lucas] decided to use the storyline for the next Star Wars trilogy" and "NASA shut down the project because it was too close to an actual UFO incident." Joking aside, LucasArts promised that The Dig will be released somtime this Summer.


Stonekeep

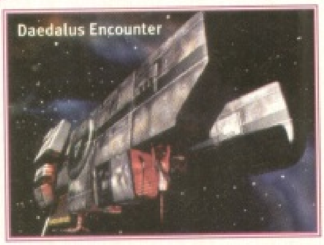
Interplay made a slightly better showing, demoing Stonekeep, a 3D fantasy RPG which looks *wonderful*; Dungeon Master II: The Legend Of Skullkeep, which was previewed last issue; Virtua Pool (well, what do you think it is?); and Frankenstein: Through The Eyes Of A Monster. This latter title is a FMV-heavy 'interactive movie' in which you actually play the notorious Monster. Starring Tim Curry, that old computer game tart, as Frankenstein (who has a worrying resemblance to a certain Jeremy Beadle), it looks very promising indeed.


Virtua Pool

Like LucasArts, MicroProse was also keeping its head down, once again showing off the brilliant Star Trek: TNG as well as its batch of current releases such as Master Of Magic, the wonderful Transport Tycoon and, of course, Colonization. The main point of interest was the early version of Top Gun on demo which, according to who you talked to, was either a tie-in with the movie or not. Whatever, the game itself is an action-orientated flight sim featuring some superb SVGA plane models and Voxel Spaced landscapes. It looks very nice indeed.


Frankenstein

viva vegas!

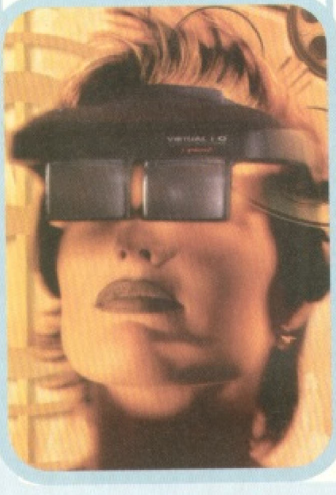

Daedalus Encounter

Daedalus Encounter

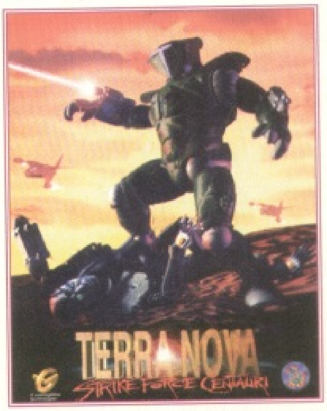
Virgin, too, was exceptionally quiet, with The Daedalus Encounter the only new game on display. This is a stunning FMV-packed adventure, in which the player explores an alien spaceship, zapping aliens and solving 7th Guest-style logic puzzles, in an attempt to find a way back to Earth. The presence of Tia Carrere, as your sexy female Space Marine side-kick, means that if nothing else it should at least be good to look at.

VR CRAZY!

In terms of new hardware peripherals, the current flavour of the month seems to be Virtual Reality kits, like the i-Glasses from Virtual i-O shown here. Many of the hardware developers had VR add-ons for the PC on display, including Forte's VFX-1 and VictorMaxx's CyberMaxx. Even Nintendo got in on the act by previewing its portable Virtual Boy games system, which allows player's to enjoy GameBoy-style games while on the move but in impressive 3D.



Also on the Virgin stand was Looking Glass Technologies, exhibiting its wonderful ultra-realistic flight sim, Flight Unlimited (see the preview on page 30). The crack development team also unveiled Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri, a first-person viewed 3D combat game in which you wander around four texture-mapped planets inside your horribly beweaponed battle armour, blasting alien ne'er-do-wells. Look out for this one — given the team's past achievements it's bound to be a doozy.



In the wake of all this corporate apathy, only Activision and GameTek really went to any effort to make a splash. Apart from confirming that Mechwarrior 2 *will* eventually see the light of day (this Summer, apparently), Activision announced a stack of new PC titles in development, including Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure, a Flashback-style arcade adventure; Planetfall: Floyd's Next Thing, an 'interactive movie' based on the classic Infocom text adventure; Zork: Nemesis, a much-enhanced sequel to the FMV epic, Return To Zork; and The Great Game, a new spy caper on the Infocom label.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

But for nostalgic old saddies like me, the star of the Activision stand was the Atari 2600 Action Pack Vol. 1, a Windows-based emulator that lets you enjoy again 15 action-packed Atari VCS classics from yesteryear, including the original Pitfall!, Kaboom!, River Raid, Chopper Command and H.E.R.O.

Mechwarrior 2

Zork: Nemesis

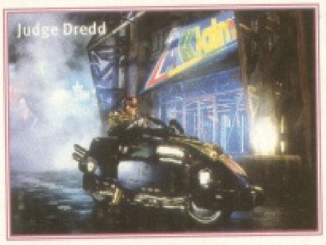
Meanwhile, GameTek took the opportunity to unveil four new titles, namely Super Street Fighter II Turbo (see news for more on this); Bureau 13, which is a bit like a graphic adventure version of the X-Files; Fairway To Heaven, a — surprise, surprise — golfing game; and Baldies, an amusing blend of Cannon Fodder and Lemmings which, although at an early stage of development, has the potential to be hugely successful.

Baldies

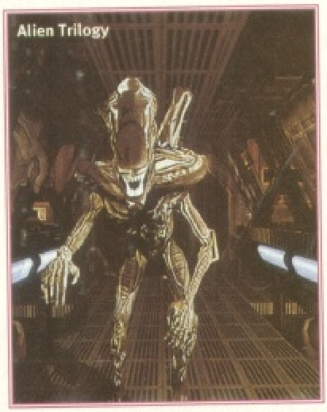
Bureau 13

THE NEW BOYS

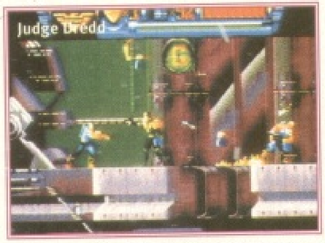
So, with most of the established PC publishers keeping a low profile, this time around it was left to companies like Acclaim and Sony Imagesoft, who are starting to move into PC development in a big way, and newly-formed multimedia giants like BMG Interactive, GTE Interactive and Time Warner Interactive to steal the thunder and make the big noise.


Judge Dredd

Acclaim, for instance, who is in the process of testing the PC waters with its excellent conversion of the Mortal Kombat II coin-op, announced an incredible NINE new games for 1995. These are likely to be pretty much straight conversions of the company's Megadrive and Super NES games, and range from tie-ins with movie blockbusters such as Stargate, Judge Dredd and Batman Forever, to arcade sports games like NBA Jam, NFL Quarterback Club and WWF Raw.


Alien Trilogy

However, of them all, the game that really whet my whistle was Alien Trilogy, a Doom-style blast-'em-up based around the classic monster movies which uses Acclaim's in-house motion-capture technology to great effect, creating some of the most realistic 3D visuals ever seen in a game of this type. Sadly, however, it's not likely to be released much before the end of the year.


Judge Dredd

Meanwhile, Sony Imagesoft, taking time off from ranting and raving about the Sony PlayStation, unveiled Johnny Mnemonic, an 'interactive movie' based on the forthcoming film of the same name from TriStar Pictures, which stars current hot Hollywood heart-throb Keanu 'Speed' Reeves.

The film, based on a short story by the father of Cyberpunk, William Gibson, centres around the adventures of the eponymous hero, Johnny Mnemonic, a data courier in the 21st Century. In the future, data is stored in memory chips implanted in the courier's brain. During the course of the film Johnny discovers that the data he's carrying exceeds his memory capacity — if he doesn't download the data in time, he will die.

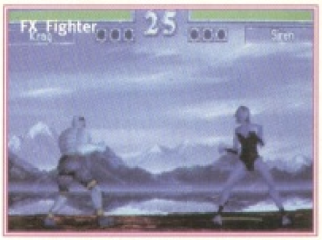
According to Mary Ann Morris, the Senior Producer at Sony Imagesoft: "In Johnny Mnemonic we set out to create a new entertainment experience, actually filming a movie to be a video game. We utilised actors and interactive backdrops in which players will be able to pick up and use many of the gadgets placed within the scenery. The result is an innovative, seamless gaming experience that will blow players' socks off!"

Johnny Mnemonic should ship later this year to tie-in with the film's Summer release date, and will come on two CD-ROMs.

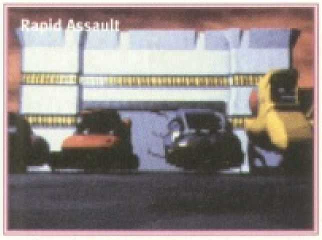
Sony Imagesoft also announced that is about to start production of a game based around Todd McFarlane's top-selling comic creation, Spawn. With the game not due to ship until Autumn, there are no hard and fast details about what the game will be like. However, McFarlane did have this to say: "Sony Imagesoft's enthusiasm and dedication to this project has been overwhelming. With our close collaboration on all aspects of the game, I'm confident that the character and the world of Spawn will be something that computer and video game fans will thoroughly enjoy."

On the subject of Sony, rumours abounded at the show that the company was planning to convert some of its current and future Playstation games to the PC, including the superb texture-mapped racing extravaganza Ridge Racer. More news about this if and when we get it.

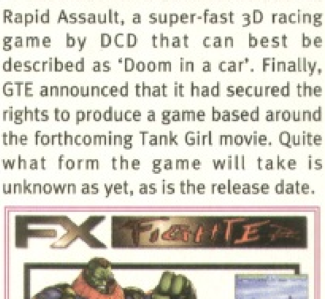
As for BMG Interactive, the company unveiled three new Rocket Science games, to whit: Flying Aces, a tongue-in-cheek World War 1 action game which involves shooting down enemy fighters as they weave, loop and dive through a series of Full Motion Video movie clips; Obsidian, a weird adventure game that I stood and looked at but couldn't make head or tail of at all; and finally Rocket Boy, an isometric-3D arcade game that has a frightening resemblance to Adeline's superb Little Big Adventure.



In terms of size, GTE Interactive had one of the most impressive stands at the show and, arguably, one of the most impressive games — FX Fighter, a Virtua Fighters-style beat-'em-up written by Argonaut Software. Employing Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped 3D fighters animated with motion-capture technology to depict the action, FX Fighter offers players nine different characters to control in eight alien 'arenas'. On top of that, each character has over 40 different combat moves, including the now-mandatory 'combos' and 'specials'. The game will be released in the Summer.


Rapid Assault

Also due for a Summer release is Rapid Assault, a super-fast 3D racing game by DCD that can best be described as 'Doom in a car'. Finally, GTE announced that it had secured the rights to produce a game based around the forthcoming Tank Girl movie. Quite what form the game will take is unknown as yet, as is the release date.

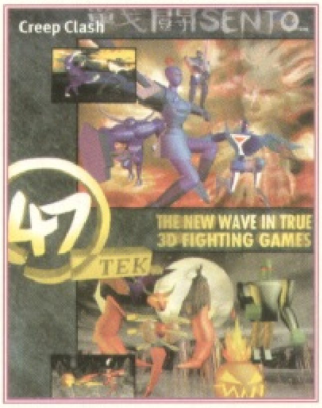


Time Warner Interactive were no slouches either, and announced seven PC titles for 1995: Striker '95, an updated and enhanced version of Rage Software's old footy sim; Fast Attack, a submarine sim by Software Sorcery, the team behind Aegis: Guardian Of The Fleet; Conqueror, a medieval strategy game also by Software Sorcery; Primal Rage, a conversion of the arcade beat-'em-up; Atmosfear, a computerised version of the popular video boardgame; and T-Mek, a battling robots game.

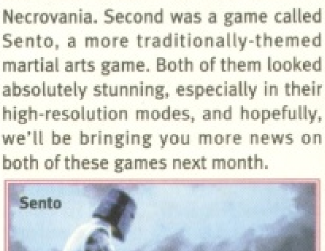
Most of these games were at a fairly early stage of development, so there was little or nothing on show. However, Software Sorcery did have in-development versions of Fast Attack and Conqueror up and running, both of which looked extremely attractive.

THE BEST OF THE REST

Obviously, it's not possible to cover all the games from all the software publishers and developers exhibiting at the CES — you'd probably need a magazine twice as thick as this one to do that. But here's the pick of the more interesting titles on display...


Creep Clash
SENTO
47
TEK
THE NEW WAVE IN TRUE 3D FIGHTING GAMES

37-Tek (yes, I'd never heard of them either) had two Virtua Fighters-inspired 3D beat-'em-ups on show. The first was Creep Clash, in which ghouls, goblins, skeletons and ghosts battle to become the new leader of the land of Necrovania. Second was a game called Sento, a more traditionally-themed martial arts game. Both of them looked absolutely stunning, especially in their high-resolution modes, and hopefully, we'll be bringing you more news on both of these games next month.

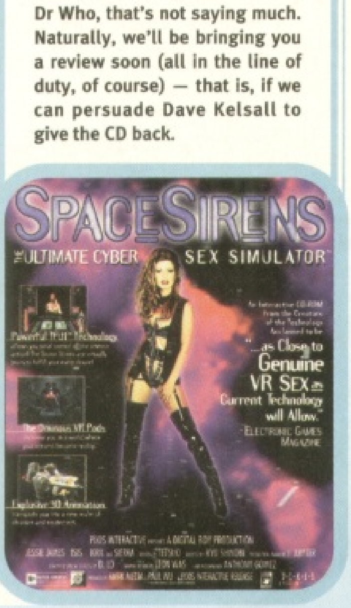

Sento

Fast Attack

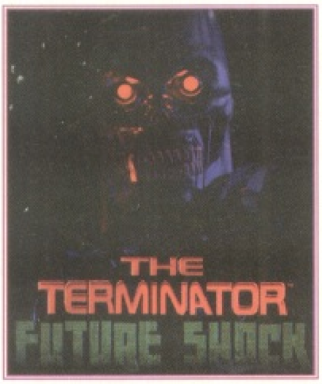
ONLY SADDIES NEED APPLY

There's something for everyone at the Winter CES — even those sad types who dribble, wear dirty macs and smell slightly funny. Yes, I'm talking about sex. Interactive sex to be precise. Take Space Sirens from Pixis Interactive, for example. It's an interactive CD-ROM adventure in which you play a space privateer, lured into the saucy clutches of the Space Sirens by a fake distress signal. Now you must fulfil their every perverted desire or remain their sex slave forever (which, if you ask me, doesn't sound that terrible a fate).

According to the games gurus on the US publication Electronic Games Magazine, Space Sirens is "...as close to genuine VR sex as current technology will allow." Well, that's as maybe — but given that even the best home VR systems produce images that are about as realistic as the special effects in Dr Who, that's not saying much. Naturally, we'll be bringing you a review soon (all in the line of duty, of course) — that is, if we can persuade Dave Kelsall to give the CD back.


SPACE SIRENS
THE ULTIMATE CYBER SEX SIMULATOR
...as Close to Genuine VR SEX as Current Technology will Allow.
ELECTRONIC GAMES MAGAZINE

viva VEGAS!

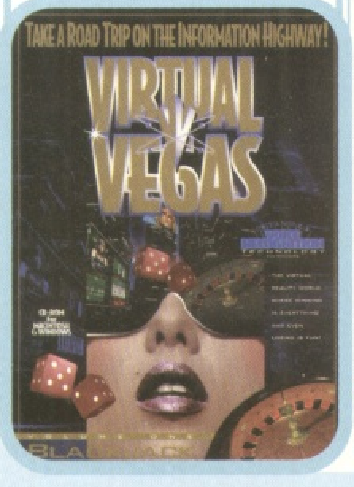

THE TERMINATOR
FUTURE SHOCK

SAVE MONEY — GO VIRTUAL!

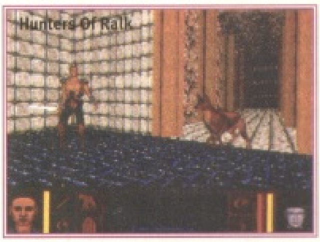
The big problem with Las Vegas is that it's nearly impossible to resist the temptation to gamble. And if you have my sort of luck, it's very easy to lose lots of money very quickly.

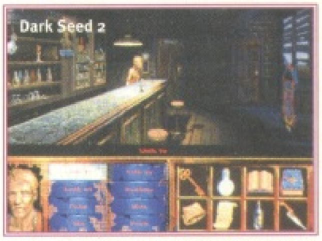
Luckily, a new gambling sim, Virtual Vegas — Vol. 1: Blackjack, is available, which lets you enjoy a night in the casinos without losing your shirt. In the game players can freely explore Virtual Vegas and play blackjack at any of three tables, each with their own beautiful interactive dealers.

However, it's not all good news for hopeless gambling addicts. Developers Virtual Vegas, Inc. are currently exploring the possibility of developing gaming applications which will let the player gamble and win money and prizes over the Internet.

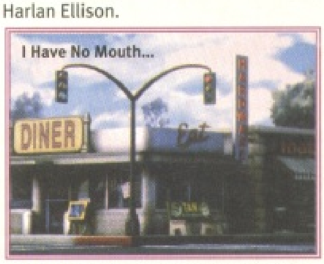

TAKE A ROAD TRIP ON THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY!
VIRTUAL VEGAS
CD-ROM for Macintosh & Windows
BLACKJACK

Bethesda showed that there was plenty more life in its Terminator licence by exhibiting The Terminator: Future Shock. Like The Terminator: Rampage, the game is set in the future when human battles robot for domination of the Earth and, also like Rampage, the game depicts the action using a Doom-inspired 3D engine, although this time, as well as running around on foot, you also get to drive and fly.


Hunters Of Ralk

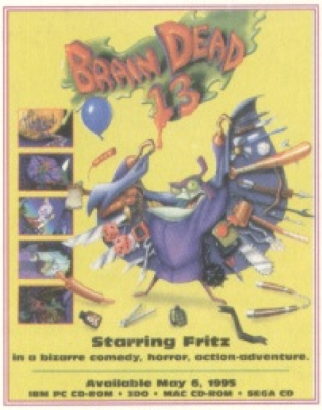

Dark Seed 2

At last Cyberdreams had something to show of Dark Seed 2, the sequel to the Giger-inspired graphic adventure of a couple of years back. Also on show was Hunters Of Ralk, a good-looking RPG created in collaboration with Gary 'AD&D' Gygax, and I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream, another graphic adventure based on a short story by Harlan Ellison.

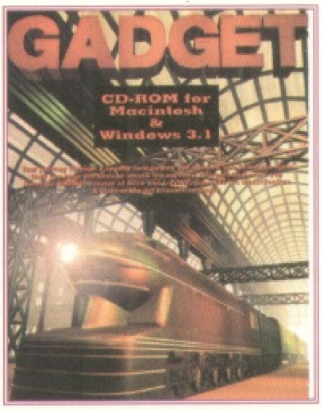

I Have No Mouth...

ReadySoft, the company behind those very pretty but totally unplayable software bimbos Dragon's Lair and Space Ace, announced that it had a bramd new game in development, namely BrainDead 13.

The game takes place in a spooky old house where, as Lance the young, spotty-faced hero, you've got to work out how to defeat the evil mastermind Dr Nero Neurosis (a man hellbent on taking over the world) and his henchmonster Fritz (a monster hellbent on laughing evilly as Dr Neurosis takes over the world.) I have to admit that it looked very nice indeed.


BRAIN DEAD 13
Starring Fritz
in a bizarre comedy, horror, action-adventure.
Available May 6, 1995
IBM PC CD-ROM • 3DO • MAC CD-ROM • SEGA CD

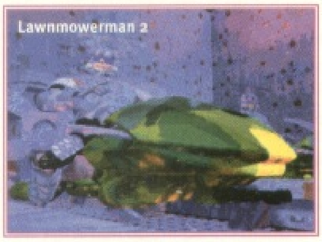
Although it obviously bears a visual resemblance to previous releases, BrainDead 13 marks something of a departure for ReadySoft — rather than being based on an old laserdisc coin-op, it's been produced from scratch by an in-house team of over 30 professional animators and far greater levels of interactivity are promised.

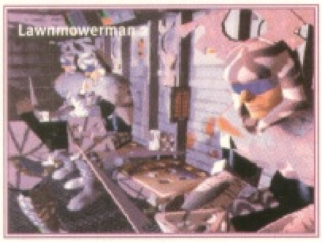

GADGET
CD-ROM for Macintosh & Windows 3.1

As if in apology for the extremely appalling CyberWar, Sales Curve Interactive revealed that it has four new titles in development, and all of them looked extremely promising.

Hard Corps is a 3D fighting game reminiscent of those impressive hand-to-hand combat scenes in the movie Dune. Kingdom O' Magic is a humorous fantasy role-playing adventure in a Terry Pratchett vein, while Gender Wars, on the other hand, is an action adventure set in a dark future where it always rains, there's lots of neon signs and where men fight against women for the ultimate dominance of the world, or something like that anyway (*la plus ca change...*).

Lastly, and how could I forget, there's Lawnmower Man 2: Jobe's War. This is an arcade game based around the plot for the forthcoming movie sequel and, if it promises anything, there'll be oodles of FMV in it.


Lawnmowerman 2


Lawnmowerman 2

Synergy Interactive Corporation are a Japan-based software company who have yet to sign a UK/European distribution deal. This is a great pity, because all of their games looked exceptionally nice, especially Gadget, a Myst-style adventure featuring exquisite SVGA graphics and a marvellously simple point-'n'-click user interface.

virtuachess
With over 5 years in Research and Development, Titus has Produced the Most Advanced and Powerful Chess game to date.
IBM PC CD-ROM
This game has all you ever dreamed of and more...
virtua chess

Titus only had one PC game on display, namely Virtua Chess. However, what the company lacked in quantity it made up for in quality. Virtua Chess features a sexy, fully-rotatable 3D chessboard rendered in SVGA as well as, so Titus claims, the most powerful chess engine ever created, possibly making it THE chess program to own.

Titus also announced that it will moving away from the simplistic console conversions it's best known for, and will be writing games specifically for the PC market. These games, which will be sold under the VERSUS label, will be complex 3D games and all will be compatible with the major VR helmets. The first game off the blocks looks like it will be Metal Combat, a futuristic tank warfare game, although Titus had nothing to show of it yet.

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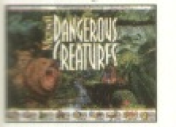

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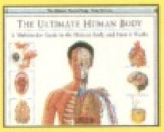

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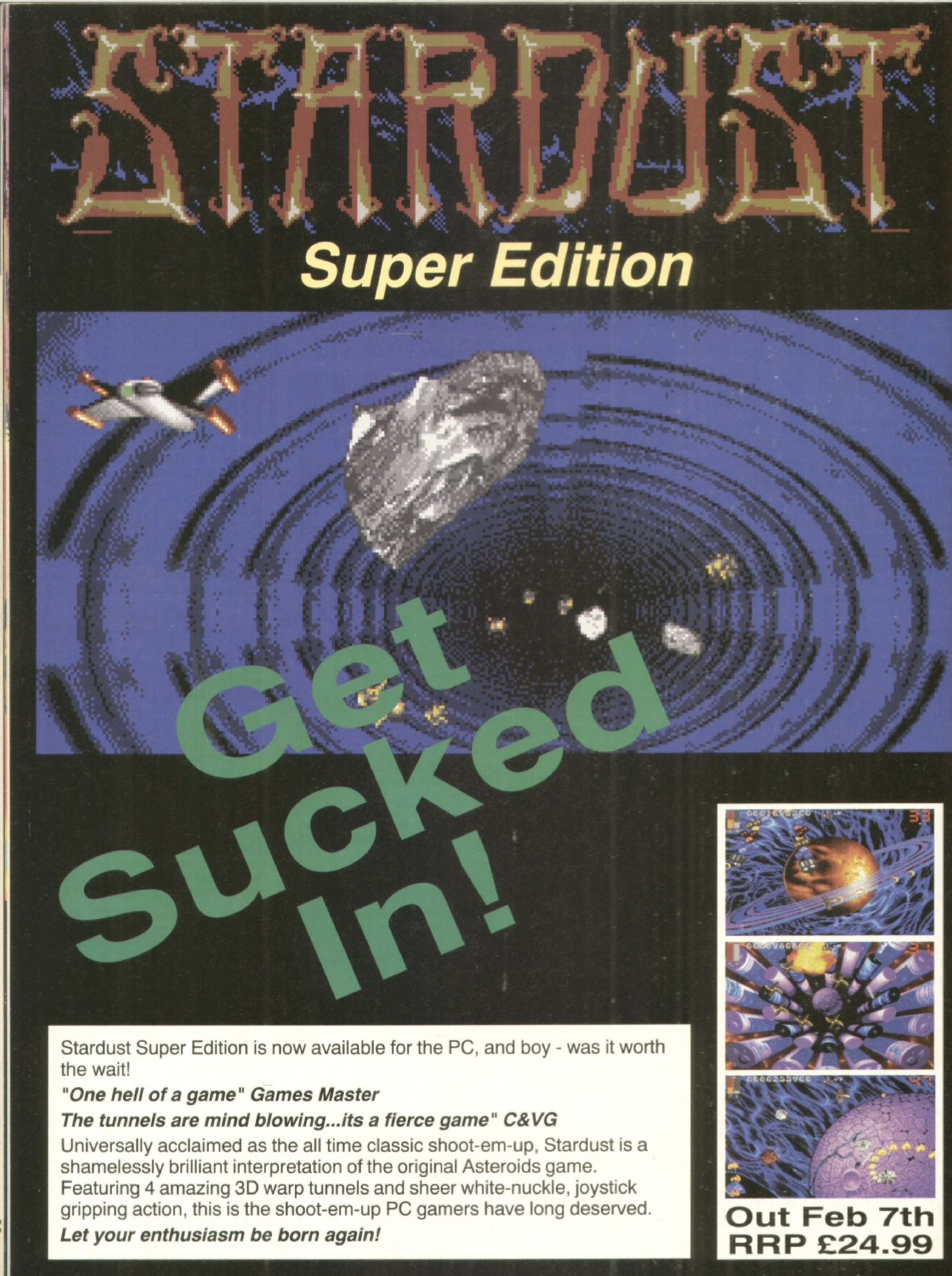

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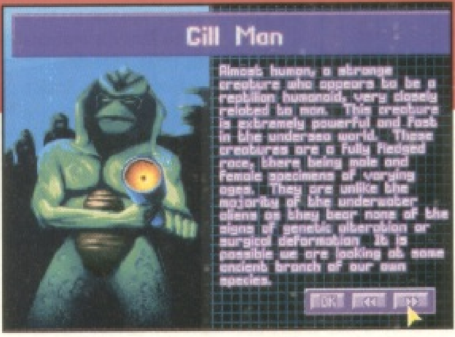
previews

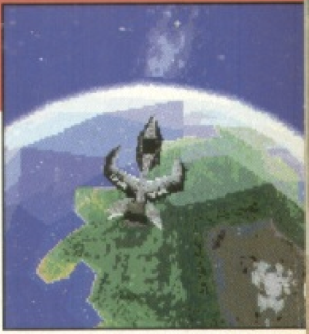
MonitorMan™

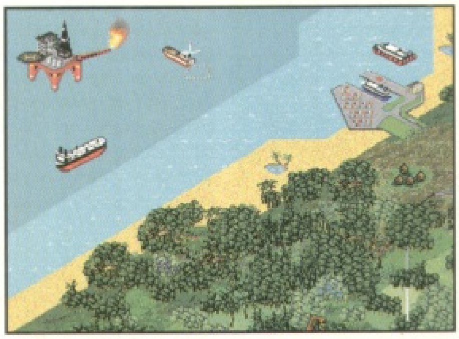
The future is very bright indeed, as we preview some of the more promising PC titles due for release over the next few months.

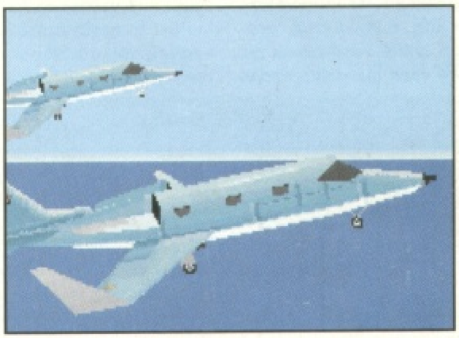


Gill Man

Almost human, a strange creature who appears to be a reptilian humanoid, very closely related to man. This creature is extremely powerful and fast in the undersea world. These creatures are a fully fledged race, there being male and female specimens of varying ages. They are unlike the majority of the underwater aliens as they bear none of the signs of genetic alteration or surgical deformation. It is possible we are looking at some ancient branch of our own species.







Sim Isle..........28

Perhaps the most unusual Sim game to date, Maxis' environmental simulation places you in charge of an island, on which you can opt to boost the economy or concentrate on ecology instead. GreenPeace gold card holder Dave Upchurch leaves the good ship Rainbow Warrior in search of paradise...

Flight Unlimited..........30

Looking Glass Technologies' stunning photo-realistic flight sim doesn't boast multi-million dollar hi-tech weaponry or gut-wrenching dogfights, just *gorgeous* SVGA graphics and a hyper-realistic flight model. Dean Evans takes to the skies to find aerial perfection.

Frontier: First Encounters..........32

Frontier: Elite II may have taken designer David Braben five years to complete, but Frontier Developments have turned around the follow-up, First Encounters, in little more than a few months. Alex Simmons spent light-years searching the galaxy for Elite III.

Navy Strike..........34

Flight sim giants MicroProse have teamed up with talented development team Rowan Software to release a deeply absorbing simulation/strategy beast. Based on modern day warfare, Top Ace Alex Simmons flew low over enemy lines in the hope of catching a tiny glimpse of the promising aerial epic.

Premier Manager 3..........36

Gremlin hope for a third successive championship win when they unleash yet another footy game, namely Premier Manager 3. Facing particularly tough opposition, has PM3 got the (foot)balls to beat off the likes Sensible World Of Soccer? Alex Simmons reports from the sidelines.

UFO: Terror From The Deep..........38

Aliens have invaded. Again! Having been defeated once already, ET and co. have returned to Earth to exact their revenge — and this time they've remembered their snorkels! Dean Evans takes the plunge and finds MicroProse's watery sequel to the challenging strategy game, UFO.

Sim-ply Tree

Can Maxis possibly top the phenomenal critical and commercial success of Sim City 2000? Well, maybe — David Upchurch reckons that the forthcoming Sim Isle has all the makings of the company's best Sim game yet.

Maxis shows no sign of running out of ideas for its incredibly successful range of Sim games. Not only has it got the sexy-looking Sim Tower in development, but it also has Sim Isle, a wonderful 'eco-management' game which, if initial impressions are anything to go by, could be even more successful than Sim City 2000.

Interestingly, Sim Isle is being produced right here in the UK by Intelligent Games, a small team of designers, programmers and artists formed two years ago by Matthew Stibbe. Stibbe himself is no stranger to complex strategy games — in the past he wrote Imperium for Electronic Arts and 'Nam for Domark — but even he admits that this is his and the team's most ambitious project yet.

As the name would suggest, Sim Isle is set on a series of islands, each covered in lush, dense layer of rainforest populated by a wide variety of exotic animals and plants. As the effective governor of these islands, you're free to do with them as you will. If you feeling particularly eco-friendly you can try to conserve the indigenous lifeforms, or if you just want to make money you can go all out to beef up the local industry. If you fancy a real challenge, on the other hand, you can attempt to do both.

However, as Stibbe points out, Sim Isle is "not so much a God game as a Prime Minister game — you're not ommipotent." Thus you don't act directly on the gameworld. Instead, you have a team of 'agents' under your control, all of whom have a range of specialist skills such as negotiation, construction, forestry and so on, and you have to decide how to deploy them to achieve your aims.

Say, for example, you want to build a ferry port on the coast, but there's already a native village on that site. First you'd send in a skilled negotiator to persuade the natives to relocate, then you'd send in a builder to begin construction. Assuming you've got enough skilled labour and material resources in reserve then you'll have a port erected in no time.

It's the use of agents, rather than banks and banks of tiny icons, to control the game that gives Sim Isle its unique flavour. This feature also makes the game a lot more accessible and easier to get into than other Sim games, and should ensure that Sim Isle will appeal to a wide audience and not just die-hard Sim fanatics.

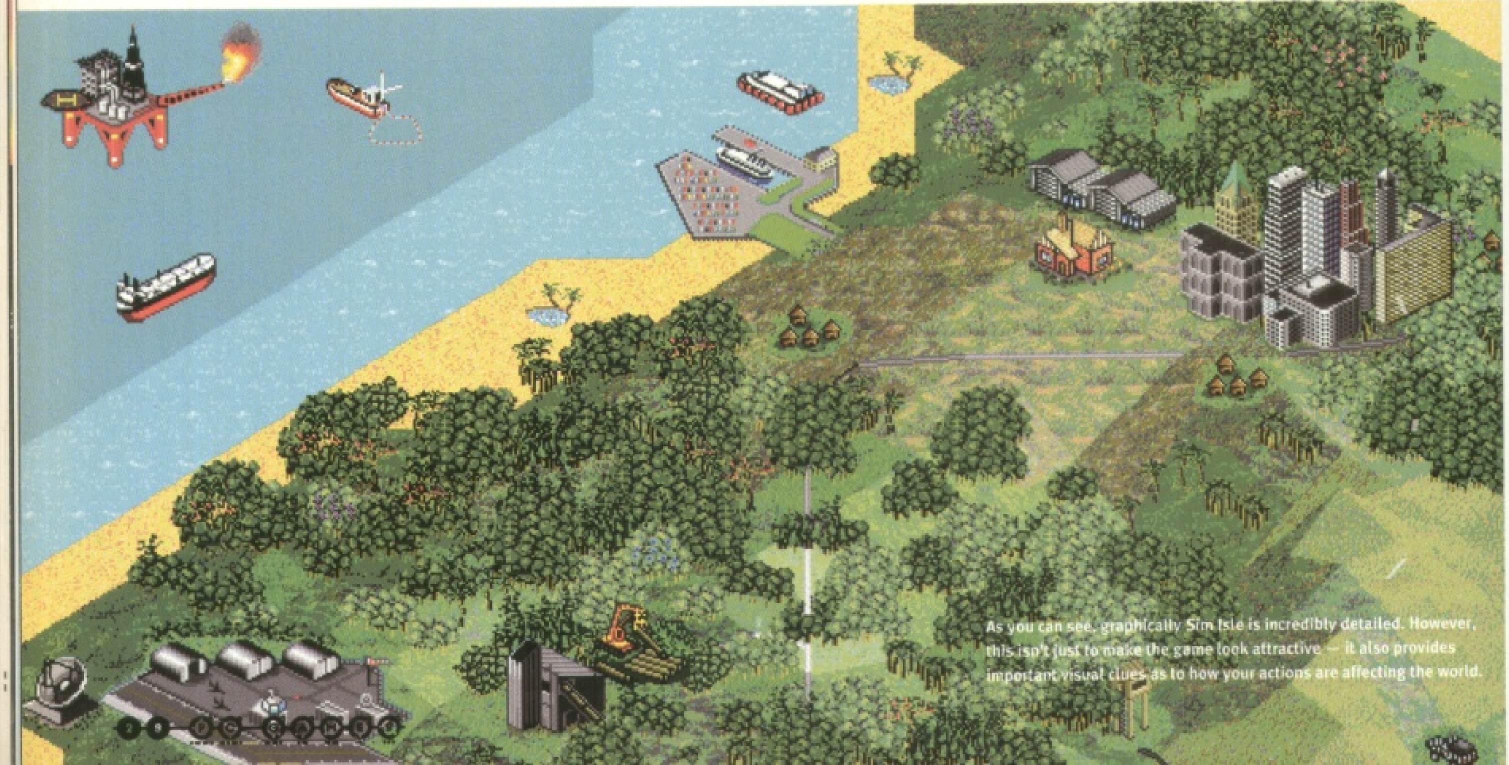
"As a game designer, one of the things that first interested me about the whole concept of Sim Isle was simply the fact that it was a complex strategic dilemma," comments Stibbe. "All computer games are about dilemmas and choices. In Sim Isle it's a case of ecology versus economy. How do you maximise both? Do you maximise one at the expense of the other? And how do you achieve this with the limited number of agents and resources and the limited amount of time at your disposal?

GAME	SIM ISLE
PUBLISHER	MAXIS
DEVELOPER	INTELLIGENT GAMES
WORK *STARTED*	AUTUMN 1992
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	SPRING 1995

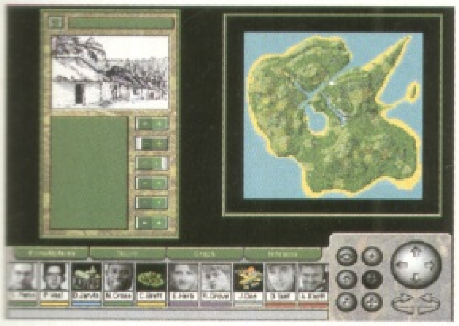
"So, all the elements are there for a really good resource management/'God' game. And there's no violence, which is a really appealing aspect of the game to me — the player faces problems which can't be solved by beating the crap out of someone."

Another unique aspect of Sim Isle is its use of 'scenarios'. As you explore the island you might discover a rare animal and be requested to build a game reserve to help preserve it. Alternatively, you might have to deal with an oil tanker spilling crude off the island's coast. There's even a Chariots Of The Gods-style scenario where you uncover the remains of an ancient alien civilisation! However, if he so wishes, the player is free to ignore these scenarios and just carry on doing his own thing.

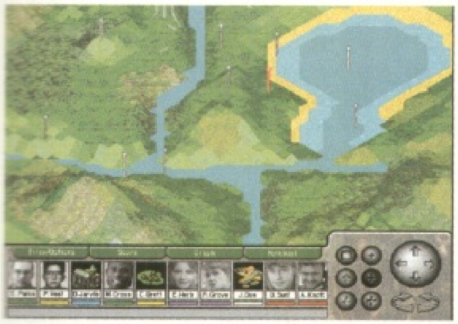
"I think the scenarios are trying to address one of my frustrations with Sim City," explains Stibbe, "which is that after the initial growth stage, where you don't have enough money to finance all the things you're trying to do, you eventually reach a point where you're rich enough to do whatever you want. We wanted to keep the player constantly interested by giving him new challenges."

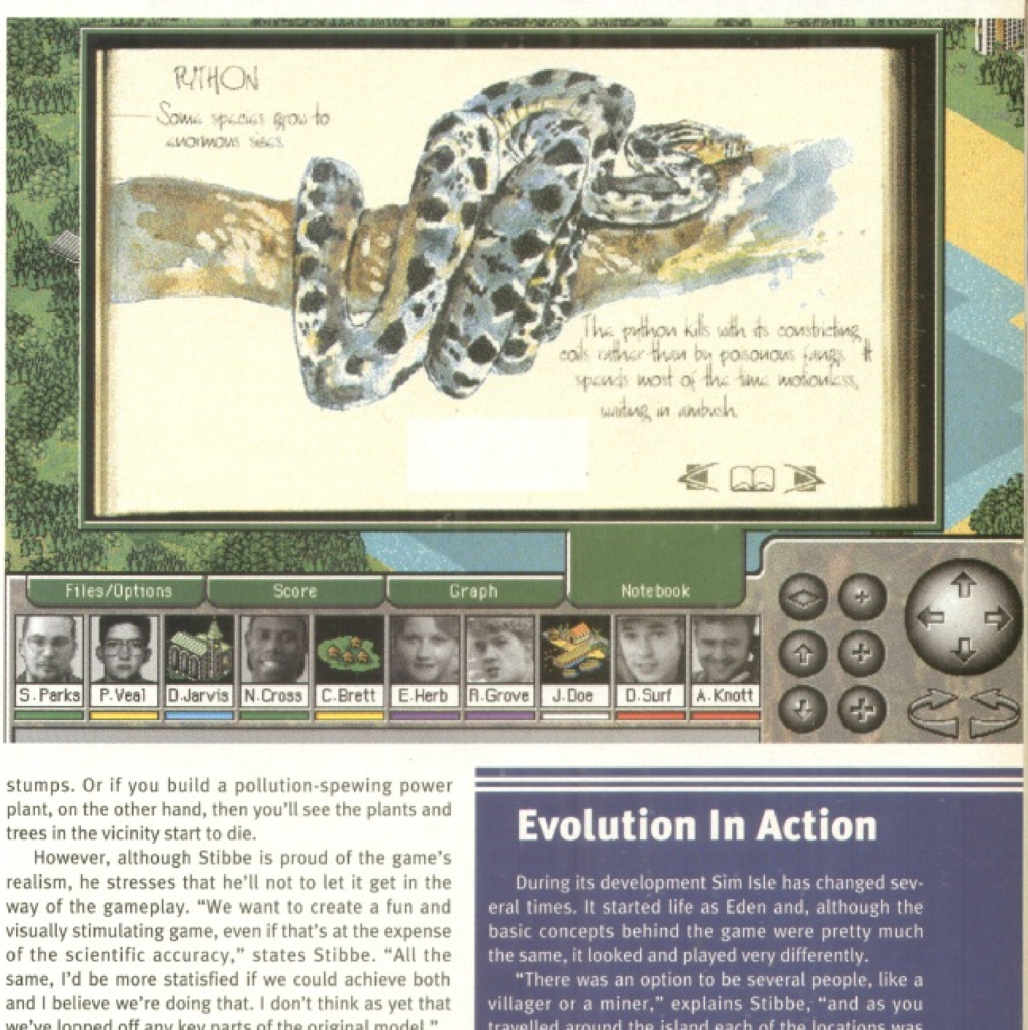

As you can see, graphically Sim Isle is incredibly detailed. However, this isn't just to make the game look attractive — it also provides important visual clues as to how your actions are affecting the world.

-mendous!



(Above) As well as the isometric-3D view of the island, which has three levels of zoom, there's also a map-like satellite view, which makes it easy to pinpoint towns and villages.





PYTHON

Some species grow to enormous sizes

The python kills with its constricting coils rather than by poisonous fangs. It spends most of the time motionless, waiting in ambush.

When designing the game, Stibbe first major was to create a realistic model of how the diverse elements living on such an island would interact. Luckily, a friend of his studied rainforest ecosystems at univeristy, and together they constructed a complex set of algorithms and formulae that now form the backbone of the game.

"It's a very good representation of how a rainforest actually works," claims Stibbe. "But I think one of the problems with such a model is that unless you make it very clear to the player why certain things are happening, it becomes a bit like Sim Earth, where you don't feel like you have a lot of control. Over the last six months of the project we been tackling how we make those relationships clear to the user."

> "I don't want people to think that [Sim Isle is] a goody-goody two-shoes game that's going to *force* them to be 'eco-friendly'... I mean, if players want to tarmac over the jungle then that's their choice."
>
> Matthew Stibbe,
> Intelligent Games Founder and Director.

Stibbe and the team have achieved this by making the results of your decisions as visual as possible. Should you build a logging camp, for example, then you'll see the forest near it slowly turned into tree stumps. Or if you build a pollution-spewing power plant, on the other hand, then you'll see the plants and trees in the vicinity start to die.

However, although Stibbe is proud of the game's realism, he stresses that he'll not to let it get in the way of the gameplay. "We want to create a fun and visually stimulating game, even if that's at the expense of the scientific accuracy," states Stibbe. "All the same, I'd be more statisfied if we could achieve both and I believe we're doing that. I don't think as yet that we've lopped off any key parts of the original model."

As a consequence of Stibbe's massive amount of research, the game contains a beautiful on-line 'notebook' which can be called up and browsed through at any time. It contains a wealth of information on rainforests and the myriad of creatures and plants that live in them. Indeed, it's quite educational...

"Argh, the dreaded 'E' word!" groans Stibbe. "As I said, our primary objective is to create a fun, entertaining simulation game. If, as a by-product, people learn from it and become informed about the issues involved then that's great — that's more than, say, a shoot-'em-up can do.

"But we're not trying to be didactic or to lecture people and say 'Here's something you should know about the rainforest'. There's information there if people want it but you don't *have* to look at it. I don't want people to think that it's a goody-goody two-shoes game that's going to force them to be 'eco-friendly', because it smacks of being patronising. I mean, if players want to tarmac over the jungle then that's their choice."

Evolution In Action

During its development Sim Isle has changed several times. It started life as Eden and, although the basic concepts behind the game were pretty much the same, it looked and played very differently.

"There was an option to be several people, like a villager or a miner," explains Stibbe, "and as you travelled around the island each of the locations was viewed from a first person perspective — it was a much more personal experience. Some of that original idea has survived in the form of the agents, but in every other aspect it's changed into much more of a 'Sim' game, with an isometric 3D map and so on."

As Eden came to resemble a 'true' Sim game, it was first retitled Sim Rainforest and then, more recently, Sim Isle. "The problem with the name Sim Rainforest was that it kind of implied that it was Sim Farm with big trees, that it was an ecological game," comments Stibbe. "Now you play a sort of island governor, and there are more economic choices to be made. We've moved away from just modelling the ecological aspects so that now the game's more of a model of the *whole* island country."

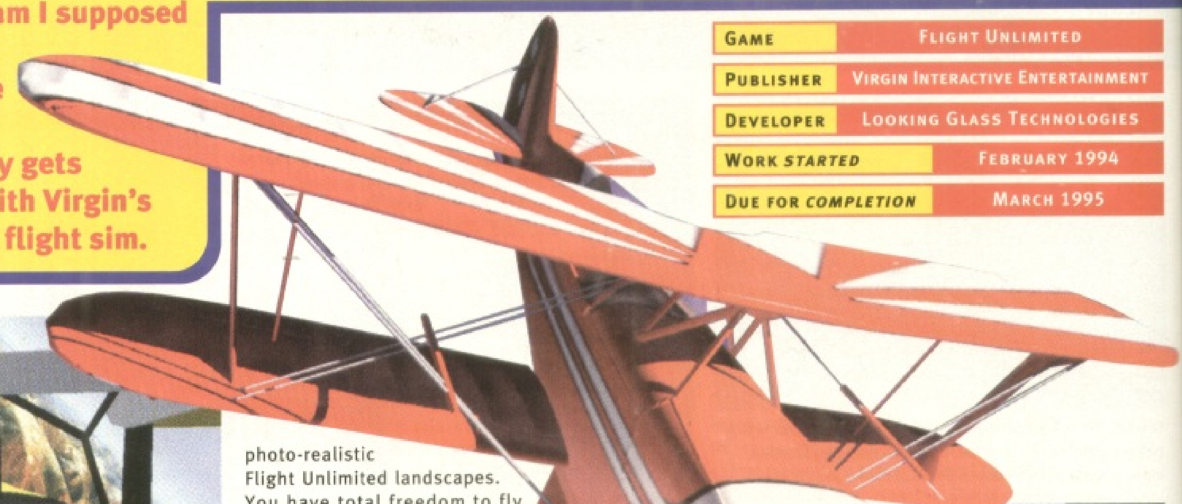
However, Stibbe accepts all this as a natural part of the game creating process: "All games evolve during development and, to be honest, if they're to be any good they have to — you can't just sit down and design a perfect game on paper. You have to do tests with focus groups and get feedback from players."

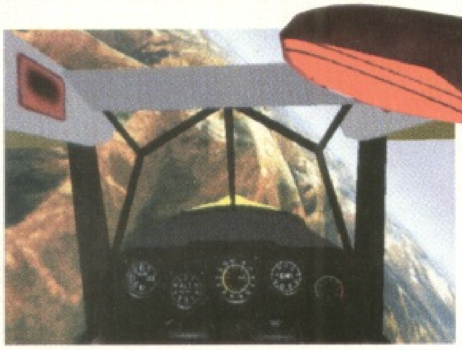
preview

Up, Up **And Away!**

No guns? What am I supposed to do up here then, gaze at the scenery? Dean Evans reluctantly gets back to basics with Virgin's spectacular new flight sim.

GAME	FLIGHT UNLIMITED
PUBLISHER	VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER	LOOKING GLASS TECHNOLOGIES
WORK *STARTED*	FEBRUARY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	MARCH 1995





Although at first glance, Flight Unlimited seems like the most gorgeous, high-resolution flight sim ever, the sort of game that will make you dribble down your shirt with unbounded enthusiasm, deep down underneath the flashy graphics, it's a lot like Microsoft's Flight Simulator 5.

That's right, there are no guns, no heat-seeking missiles and not a strategic campaign or Laser-Guided Bomb anywhere in sight. None whatsoever. Flight Unlimited simulates what it's like to fly *civilian* aircraft. It recreates the flying experience exactly and, like Flight Sim 5, it's so realistic that long hours in your virtual cockpit can apparently reduce the number of flying lessons you need to take if you're thinking of trying to get a light aircraft pilot's license for real.

Developed by Boston-based Looking Glass Technologies (the company behind System Shock, Ultima Underworld and Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer), Flight Unlimited is generating a lot of interest because it features a brand new, some might even call it a 'revolutionary', 3D flight engine. Each one of the five aerobatic aircraft on offer has been electronically recreated to match its real-life counterpart, but it's the quality of the graphics that makes Flight Unlimited stand apart from the flight sim crowd.

"Up until now, home computer flight sims have relied upon outdated polygon graphics to draw the terrain," explains Simon Byron, who's handling the game's PR in the UK. "Although this method is adequate for games, a flat green ground with a few randomly placed triangles is hardly what you'd call realistic ground detail. Flight Unlimited isn't like this at all. It uses a unique graphics engine — aerial photos of five locations across America have been digitised, stereo-imaged and texture-mapped to produce the most realistic cockpit views ever seen in a simulation."

He may be right. Looking Glass has taken aerial photographs of five 13 square-mile areas in America and created texture maps of them to produce the photo-realistic Flight Unlimited landscapes. You have total freedom to fly wherever you want, swooping down through valleys, soaring over snow-capped mountain peaks or landing at any one of the numerous gameworld airports. All of the terrain in the game is active. For example, you don't just have to take off and fly from A to B — if you see a road cutting through the fields below you, then you can land on it if you want.

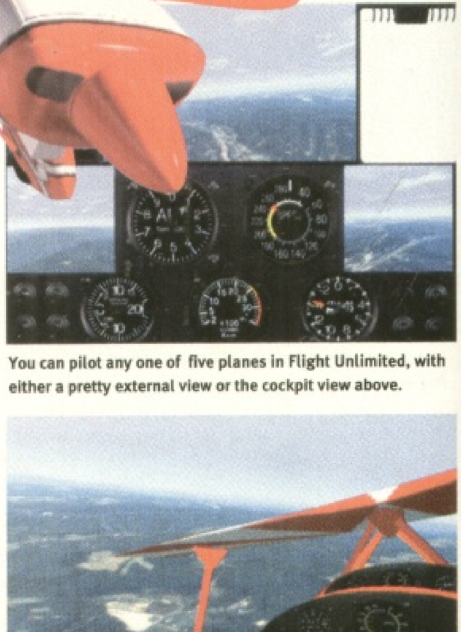
"Once you've mastered the basics of flying," reveals Byron, "Flight Unlimited also challenges you to learn the most difficult manoeuvres a pilot can tackle. A real aerobatics instructor talks you through 25 stunts, inverted loops, tail spins, etc, and provides a full critique at the end of it. You can also try your hand on one of the race courses and then you can watch your exploits using the video playback feature."

If this pre-launch look is anything to go by, Flight Unlimited promises to trounce Flight Sim 5 when it finally appears in March. Better still, the game will be playable in a variety of graphics modes including a stunning 1024x768 SVGA mode, a striking 640x480 and, of course, bog-standard 320x200 VGA mode.

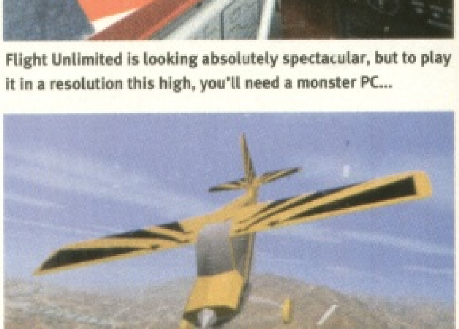
It's also compatible with the Forte VFX1 and CyberMaxx VR headsets, but if you want to take advantage of this you'll only be able to play the game in a resolution of 240x180 (i.e. the resolution of the LCD screens in the headsets). But having flown a glider in VR mode, the game is no less impressive and jaw-dropping with fuzzier visuals.

"The gaming public perceive good graphics to equal quality," says Michael Sacks, Product Marketing Manager at Looking Glass Technologies. "But we believe that underneath Flight Unlimited's undoubtedly superior visuals lies one of the most comprehensive physics models ever created. Flight Unlimited simulates flying so accurately, we're thinking about including an airsickness bag."

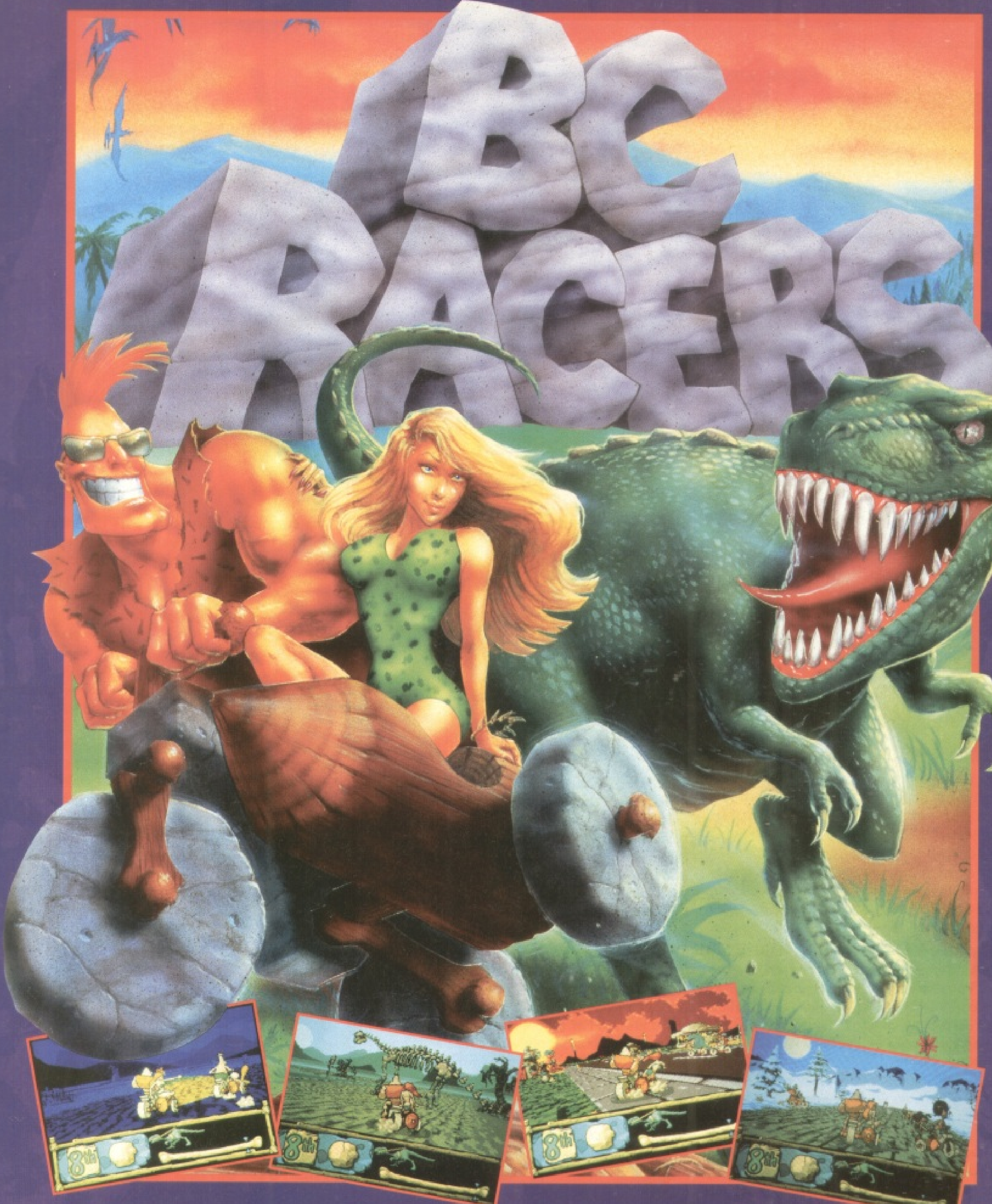
Er, yes. Quite. We'll have a full review of Flight Unlimited as soon as we can get our hands on a copy, but until then, if you're planning to dribble over the page with excitement, please get a piece of glass or some cling film to protect the paper. Saliva smudges the print, you know...



You can pilot any one of five planes in Flight Unlimited, with either a pretty external view or the cockpit view above.



Flight Unlimited is looking absolutely spectacular, but to play it in a resolution this high, you'll need a monster PC...



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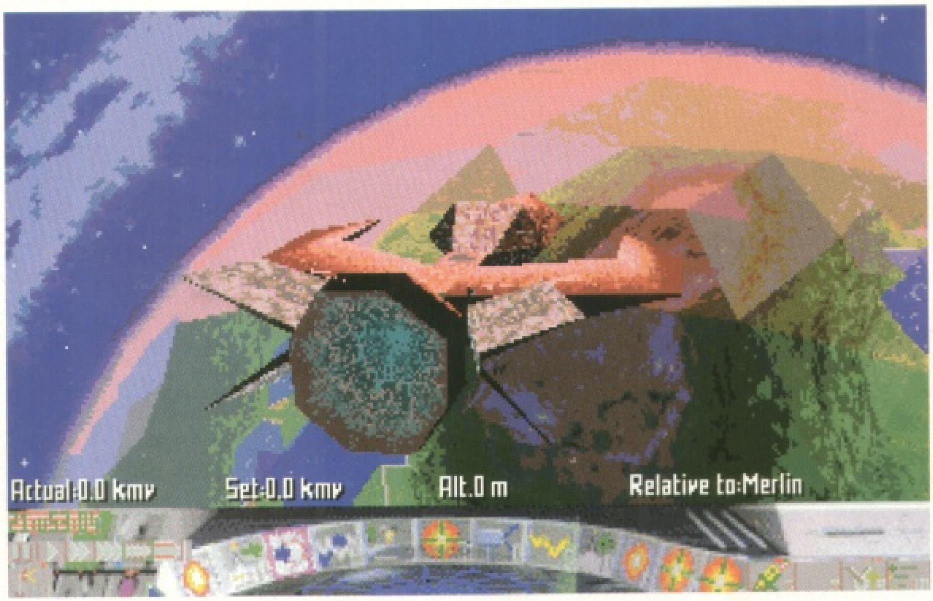
The Next



GAME	FRONTIER: FIRST ENCOUNTERS
PUBLISHER	GAME TEK
DEVELOPER	FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS
WORK *STARTED*	MARCH 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	MARCH 1995

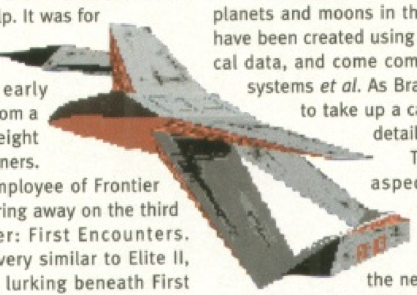
Venturing into the uncharted universe, Alex Simmons travels beyond the Final Frontier in search of David Braben's latest brain-child.

Five years is a long time to spend holed up in a darkened room, staring bleary-eyed at a glowing VDU, hacking away at thousands of lines of code. That's how long it took David Braben, the genius behind the classic Elite, to create one of the most eagerly awaited PC games of recent history, namely Frontier: Elite II.

Braben, along with partner Ian Bell, produced the original Elite while both were students at Cambridge University, before diverting his attention to Virus (AKA Zarch) which appeared a couple of years later. Then work started on Elite II, in which Braben had the opportunity to explore his interest in astronomy by creating a realistic universe with stars, planets and spaceships that adhered to the laws of physics.

There was more to the game than simply attaining the rank of Elite pilot, too. Gamers could choose from a wide selection of careers, and progress through the ranks of whatever profession they decided to specialise in, be it military, merchant, assassin or whatever. But Frontier: Elite II was released well over a year ago, back in October 1993. What has Braben been up to since?

Well, after the five years of hard work and effort that went into the making of Elite, Braben soon realised that battling through such mammoth projects on his own was no longer a viable option. He wanted to start work on yet another instalment of the Elite series, but in order to do this effectively he would need a little help. It was for this reason that Frontier Developments was formed, and since it's conception in early 1994 the company has grown from a three-man band to a team of eight programmers, coders and designers.



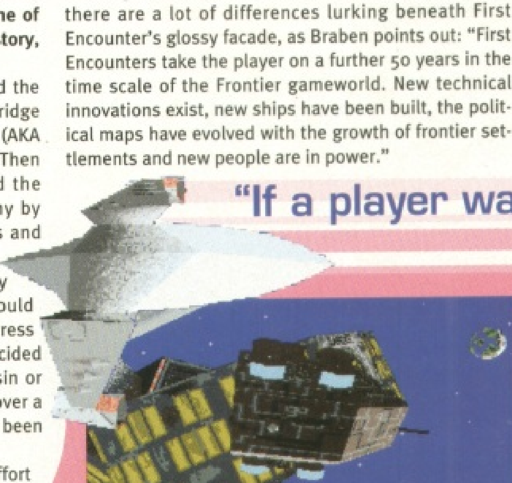
Since then, every single employee of Frontier Developments has been beavering away on the third Elite game, entitled Frontier: First Encounters. Although looking essentially very similar to Elite II, there are a lot of differences lurking beneath First Encounter's glossy facade, as Braben points out: "First Encounters take the player on a further 50 years in the time scale of the Frontier gameworld. New technical innovations exist, new ships have been built, the political maps have evolved with the growth of frontier settlements and new people are in power."

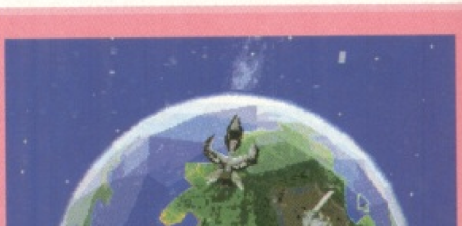
Surprisingly, First Encounters has been written completely from scratch — not a single byte of code has been ported over from Elite II, and as a result Frontier Development has been able to include a host of new attractions in the game. First of all, First Encounters looks better than before, and includes a load of new ships with which to do battle. Additionally, all the old ships, cityscapes, space stations and docking bays have been texture-mapped to create a higher level of authenticity.

The planets are very different, too. Those familiar with Elite II will no doubt know that the terrain was flat, with the occasional polygon hill dotted around. All that has completely changed in First Encounters, because now the planets are, as GameTek are keen to stress, 'real'. Texture-mapped mountains stretch into the sky, while polar ice-caps, desert plains and desolate moors add realism to each of the hundreds of planets and moons in the Frontier universe. All them have been created using factually accurate astronomical data, and come complete with complex weather systems *et al*. As Braben jokes, "If a player wants to take up a career as a map-maker, all the details will be there to do so!"

The presentation isn't the only aspect of the game to receive a face-lift, and the user-interface has been completely redesigned. David describes the new look: "The player is placed firmly inside the ship's cabin, seated at a computer which has been rendered in 3D Studio. When docked, the inside of the cabin is visible and varies from the basic, cramped interior of the tiny single-seater Eagle, to the vast, luxurious splendour of the top-of-the-range Gyr-class cruiser." Braben adds: "All the interi-

"If a player wants to take up a career





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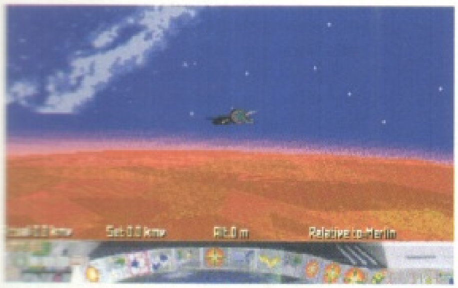

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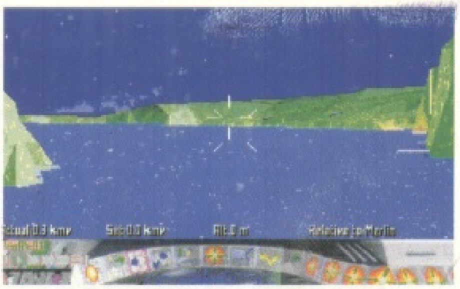


ors are being painted by an artist, Danny Flynn, to avoid the consistent computer graphic images prevalent in many current games."

Continuing on the subject of the revamped user-interface, David comments: "When in flight, the view screens are projected as a HUD in front of the player, and various maps, bulletin boards and inventories can be called up which overlay it. The icon layout has been completely redesigned to make it more intuitive, building on feedback from players of Frontier: Elite II and on the experiences of team members. Icons have been added to go with new features, and the system has been designed to minimise the number of key presses required to activate any given function."

In addition to this fairly drastic interface overhaul, a lot of smaller features have been updated. For instance, there are more views than before, and now missiles can be fitted with forward-facing cameras which treats the pilot to a missile's eye view from the moment of launch right up to the point of impact. There's also the combat computer, which can be bought. Similar in design to the basic on-board scanner, the combat computer has a longer range and can verify targets in greater detail. An array of new weapons has also found its way into the game, and ship manoeuvrability has been enhanced to improve the excitement of ship-to-ship combat.

While all of this may take Elite II one step further, it's the on-line journals which really set First Encounters apart from the previous games. A cross between a modern newspaper and e-mail bulletins, there are five journals in all, three of which are affiliated to major political powers (and therefore reflect their views) while the other two are independent. They're updated monthly and are available on subscription throughout the galaxy, and news on the actions which the player performs and vital mission data can be found within them. Filled with pages of information, this futuristic bulletin board provides a wealth of useful data to any level-headed subscriber.

With all these advances in the Frontier universe, it may come as a bit of a surprise to learn that one element of the original Elite has returned in First Encounters — the Thargoids. They were virtually non-existent in Elite II, but now they're back with a vengeance and are the subject of a series of missions which span some three game years. During this campaign, pilots can acquire advanced Alien equipment, before making the God-like decision of whether or not to wipe the Thargoids from the galaxy!

Considering Elite was in development for five years, First Encounters has been produced in record time, thanks to Braben's experienced programming team. Appearing on CD, there will be versions specially optimised for use on 386, 486 and Pentium-based machines all included on the disc.

Frontier Developments are adding the finishing touches to First Encounters. If all goes according to plan, the final product should hit the shelves in March. Expect a review in the next issue.

as a map-maker, all the details will be there to do so!" David Braben, Frontier Developments.

Feelin' Supersonic!

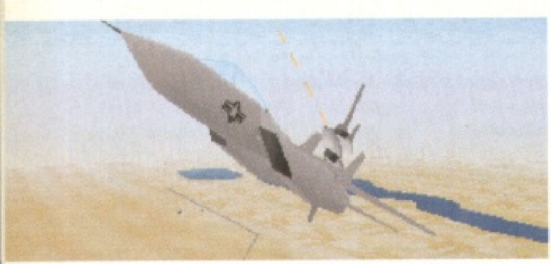
Maverick pilot Alex Simmons sets of on a reconnaissance mission to catch a glimpse of the MicroProse/Rowan collaboration, Navy Strike.

GAME	NAVY STRIKE
PUBLISHER	MICROPROSE
DEVELOPER	ROWAN SOFTWARE
WORK *STARTED*	SUMMER 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	MARCH 1995

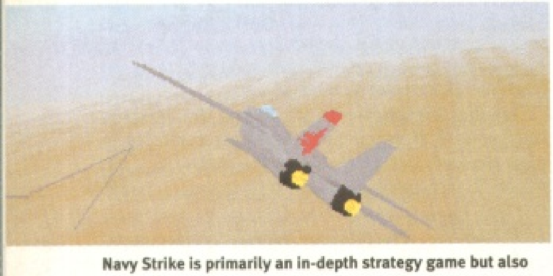
Two of the biggest names in flight simulation have teamed together to bring you what promises to be the most entertaining and absorbing aerial warfare sim ever. Having promptly snapped up Rowan Software's latest release, MicroProse are quite rightly confident that Navy Strike will be more comprehensive than anything else presently available, because it is both a flight sim *and* a full-blown strategy game in one.

Navy Strike really is a complex beast. There are many levels to the gameplay, as MicroProse's Jason Dutton explains: "Navy Strike is a game of Task Force Command set in the modern day. With the threat to the West of the Warsaw Pact a dim and distant memory, current conflicts revolve around civil unrest and dictatorships invading neighbouring countries to 'reclaim what is rightfully theirs'.

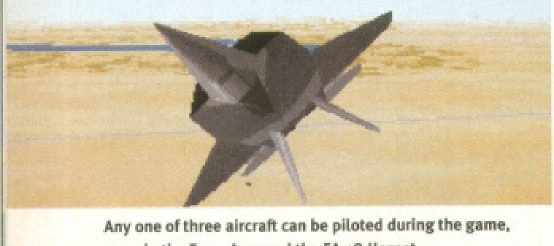
"Warfare is now governed by public pressure, politicians promising 'limited response' and 'minimised collateral damage', and huge meetings of faceless NATO Generals and politicians unwilling to decide on action, while the armed forces constantly strain at the leash to be let free to go deal with the 'enemy'."



Again Rowan revive their powerful 3D engine, which is used to great effect in Navy Strike's action sequences.



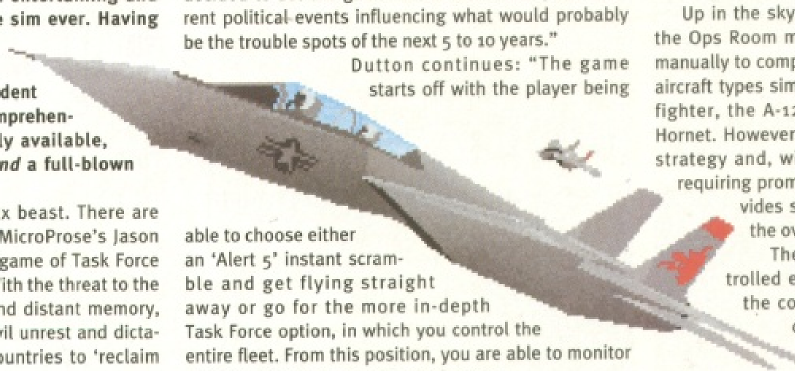
Navy Strike is primarily an in-depth strategy game but also allows you to take part in the battle flying any aircraft.

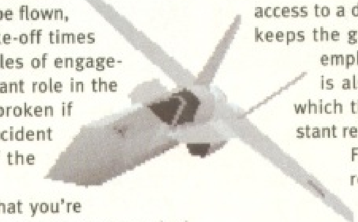


Any one of three aircraft can be piloted during the game, namely the F-22, A-12 and the FA-18 Hornet.

It was Rowan Software who came up with concept behind the game, and they then approached MicroProse later on. Jason Dutton explains the story behind the game: "Navy Strike was born out of the desire to create a strategy game with flight sim elements situated within a real world scenario. It was decided to set the game in the near future, with current political events influencing what would probably be the trouble spots of the next 5 to 10 years."

Dutton continues: "The game starts off with the player being able to choose either an 'Alert 5' instant scramble and get flying straight away or go for the more in-depth Task Force option, in which you control the entire fleet. From this position, you are able to monitor potential threats, create missions to be flown, select the aircraft to be flown, arm them accordingly, set take-off times and so on, all in real-time. Rules of engagement play an extremely important role in the game, as these must not be broken if you are to avoid a political incident and possible termination of the campaign scenario."



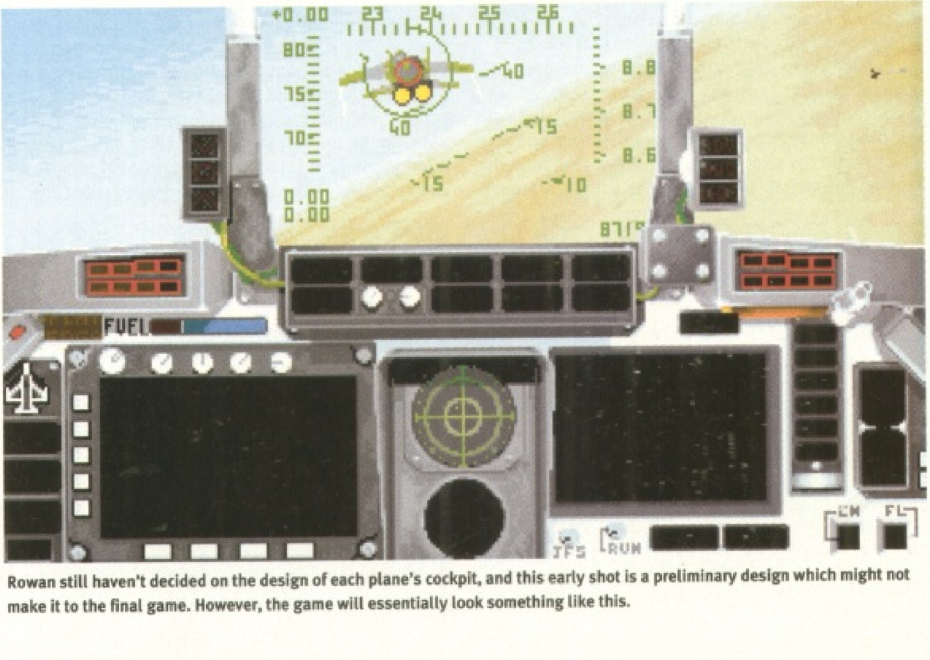


It's into this political riot that you're thrown, as Commander of the Task Force sent to deal with any potential threat, be it another invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, enforcing total exclusion zones or even policing the trouble hot-spots around Libya. In this role of Commander, you're responsible for the completion of all mission objectives, as well as the safety of the Task Force and even controlling the actions of the air wings aboard the carriers.

Up in the sky, the aircraft can be viewed through the Ops Room monitors and, at any point, be flown manually to complete a tricky mission. There are three aircraft types simulated in the game, namely the F-22 fighter, the A-12 bomber and the multi-role FA-18 Hornet. However, Navy Strikes emphasis is primarily strategy and, with so much information coming in requiring prompt action, flying just one aircraft provides short-term benefits at the expense of the overall campaign.

The 3D simulation sequences are controlled either by joystick or keyboard, while the command scenario is entirely mouse-driven, with the exception of entering route and mission names via the keyboard. This allows for rapid access to a database full of information, and also keeps the gameplay moving smoothly and the emphasis on the unfolding action. There is also an on-line help system built in, which therefore reduces the need for constant reference to a large manual.

Following the trend of recent Rowan releases, namely Overlord and the more recent Dawn Patrol — and considering so much time was spent developing their advanced 3D engine — Navy Strike is almost certain to include an power-hungry SVGA mode as well as the normal VGA graphics. However, we'll know for certain when the game is released some time in March.



Rowan still haven't decided on the design of each plane's cockpit, and this early shot is a preliminary design which might not make it to the final game. However, the game will essentially look something like this.

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Third Ti

As Alex Simmons discovered, Gremlin are set to go for a third successive championship this season with their new footy sim Premier Manager 3.

Fact: Premier Manager 2 has sold billions of copies. Even after a year on the shelves, PM2 is still shifting by the bucket-load and has been hovering in the charts ever since its release. As to why, who knows? But it seems footy-fever is causing PC owners to forget the likes of Magic Carpet and Little Big Adventure and instead opt for Gremlin's oldie.

But even in the face of this success, Gremlin hasn't rested on its laurels. They know that it's almost as difficult to maintain a championship winning side as it is to build one, and therefore the fatigued PM2 is ready to retire to the sidelines to make way for the fighting-fit Premier Manager 3.

It's surprising to learn just how massive the following behind the Premier Manager games is, and indeed PM1 and 2 are arguably Gremlin's biggest earners. But why on earth do we need *another* Premier Manager game? Surely the past two will suffice? "There's a demand for it, pure and simple," reckons the man known only as 'TC', PM3's Producer at Gremlin. "This kind of game is popular because football is popular. People always think they can do better than the manager of their favourite team."

TC is the kind soccer-crazy guy you'd expect to be working on a project like Premier Manager 3, and he's been part of all three Premier Manager games on both the Amiga and the PC. He adds: "I used to play management games all the time, for some reason." He too is surprised by their success but believes "their popularity may have something to do with the fact that they're all long-lasting games. You certainly can't complete them as easily as you could an adventure or an arcade game, and if you buy one then you can be sure you'll be playing it in several months' time." A valid point, I'm sure you'll agree.

Previously, TC worked on various products before producing the original Premier Manager, so what's he got planned for Premier Manager 3 and where did he get his ideas from? "It's amazing how much correspondence both the Premier Manager games generated. We've had loads of people writing in and suggesting things we could do to improve the game, and we've read every one."

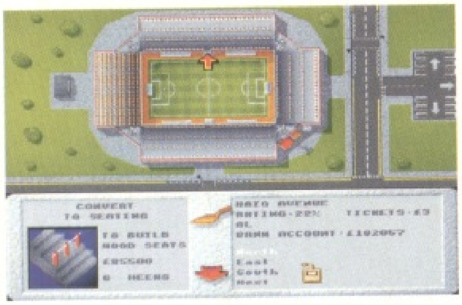
Apparently the main differences are in the tactics, as now you can assign an area of the pitch which each player will adhere to. Because the pitch is divided into 15 such zones, you have almost complete freedom to place team members wherever you want. What's more, the players can be 'ordered' to pass to allocated areas and so on, which allows the gamer to get more involved in the game.

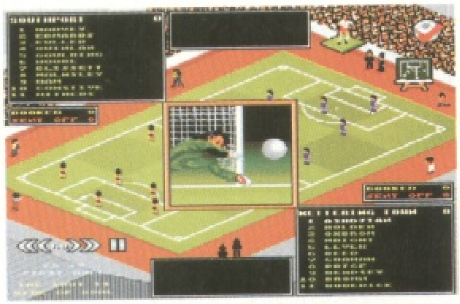
One thing to watch out for, though, are the more aggressive players and stricter referees, a combination of which could result in considerably more bookings. According to TC, the process works something like this: "Bad challenges and stuff are calculated like this: you've got varying degrees of referees, from soft to hard, and a certain amount of aggression. The game looks at these two values and performs certain calculations, taking into consideration an element of chance. At its simplest level, a player with low aggression has, say, a one in a hundred chance of being booked, whereas a player with high aggression will have roughly a one in 30 chance of being booked."

Another new feature included is that gamers will now be helped out by an assistant manager, who deals with the more menial tasks, such as sorting out sponsorship boards and taking care of the day-to-day stuff most managers don't bother with. Mind you, if you feel you can control the whole caboodle yourself, simply switch him off.

"When you first meet your assistant manager, he trains up your squad so that you don't have to mess around too much before getting into the season," explains TC. "He'll also deal with injuries, and even

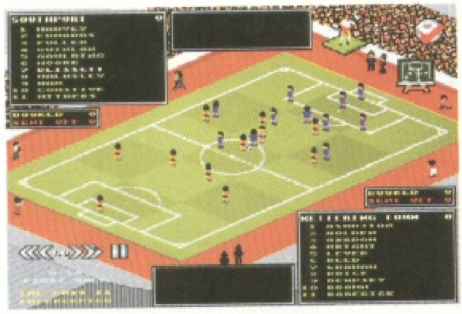
GAME	PREMIER MANAGER 3
PUBLISHER	GREMLIN INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER	REALMS OF FANTASY
WORK *STARTED*	SUMMER 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	FEBRUARY 1995

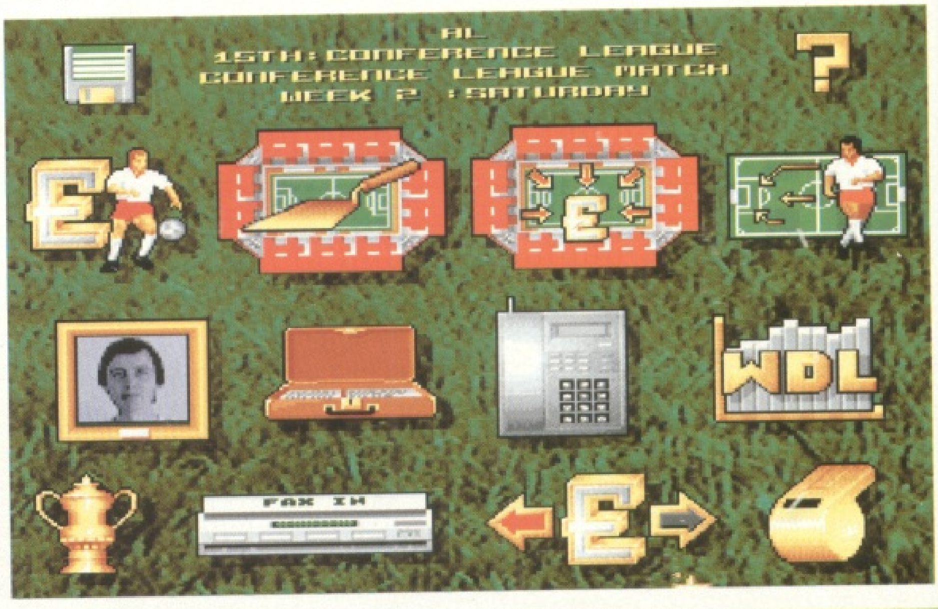




(Above) "And it's a brilliant save from Southport's star keeper, Harvey, who manages to keep the score all square in the fifteenth minute."

(Below) Premier Manager 3 has been totally re-designed since PM2, and now features a slick tactical 3D display so you can evaluate your performance and tactics on the field.





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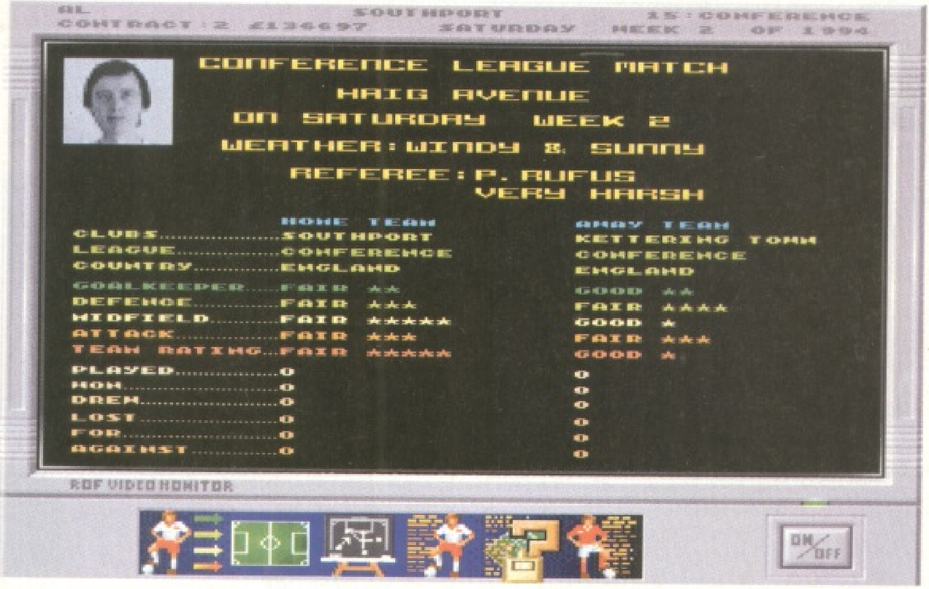

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        WEATHER:WINDY & SUNNY
            REFEREE:P. RUFUS
                    VERY HARSH

                HOME TEAM                 AWAY TEAM
CLUBS...........SOUTHPORT                 KETTERING TOWN
LEAGUE..........CONFERENCE                CONFERENCE
COUNTRY.........ENGLAND                   ENGLAND
GOALKEEPER......FAIR **                   GOOD **
DEFENCE.........FAIR ***                  FAIR ****
MIDFIELD........FAIR *****                GOOD *
ATTACK..........FAIR ***                  FAIR ***
TEAM RATING.....FAIR *****                GOOD *
PLAYED..........0                         0
WON.............0                         0
DREW............0                         0
LOST............0                         0
FOR.............0                         0
AGAINST.........0                         0
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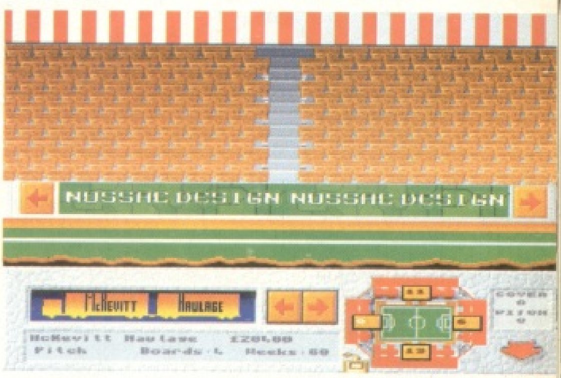
(Left) Here yer go, anoraks (and Dean!), a load of footie statistics to whet your whistle. As you can imagine, Premier Manager 3 is filled with page after page of stats detailing the current league positions and so on.

(Below) Sponsorship is all-important, because without the valuable money from the advertisers you're ground will falls to pieces. What's more, you can even get your stadium sponsored by PC Games!



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McKevitt Haulage   £200,00
Pitch       Boards:L   Weeks:60
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sack players he feels aren't performing to the best of their ability. Ultimately he's there to help — he won't sneak around behind the scenes changing things you've already set up."

However, even though your assistant is all too keen to help, you must not forget that the key to success *isn't* just scoring goals. Renovating the grounds is just as important as knocking the balls in the back of the net, because there's no point getting your team into the Premier League if your stadium can't accommodate the amount of fans flocking to see your all-conquering team.

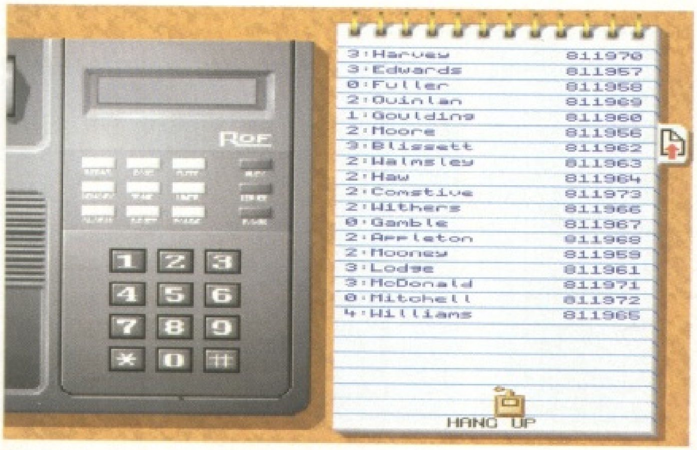
Statistics will play a big part in Premier Manager 3, which features more stats than any of the previous games. It's also important that the game is bang up to date, and therefore the final details will be added the week before the game is released. Mind you, this didn't prove enough as, after the game was deemed finished, Andy Cole moved from Newcastle and therefore the in-game figures are *slightly* incorrect.

So even though Premier Manager 3 towers above its two predecessors, how will it stand up against the competition? "We're not worried," reckons TC. "We obviously pay a lot of attention to the other games, but I think there are enough differences between them all to warrant purchasing more than one."

Ah, but what about the imminent release of Sensible World Of Soccer? Surely that scares you? "Not really. Sensible World Of Soccer is a good game but the managerial side hasn't really got the depth of many other managerial games. I enjoy playing the arcade side of Sensi, but that's about it."

When you think about it, football management games are fairly difficult to improve upon, because there's only so many new features you can include without making the game over-complicated. Basically, all a football manager game does is generate scores based on random elements, taking into account the player's decision — anything on top of this is just extra frills and presentation.

Even so, Gremlin is confident that Premier Manager 3 will be the definitive football manager game, and judging on past efforts it has every right to be confident. If Gremlin manage to squeeze all these new features into the final game they can expect yet another best-seller. However, the question we're all asking here at PC GAMES is whether or not PM3 will be as good as the inevitable Premier Manager 4?



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3:Harvey       811970
3:Edwards      811957
0:Fuller       811958
2:Quinlan      811969
1:Goulding     811960
2:Moore        811956
3:Blissett     811962
2:Walmsley     811963
2:Haw          811964
2:Comstive     811973
2:Withers      811966
0:Gamble       811967
2:Appleton     811968
2:Mooney       811959
3:Lodge        811961
3:McDonald     811971
0:Mitchell     811972
4:Williams     811965
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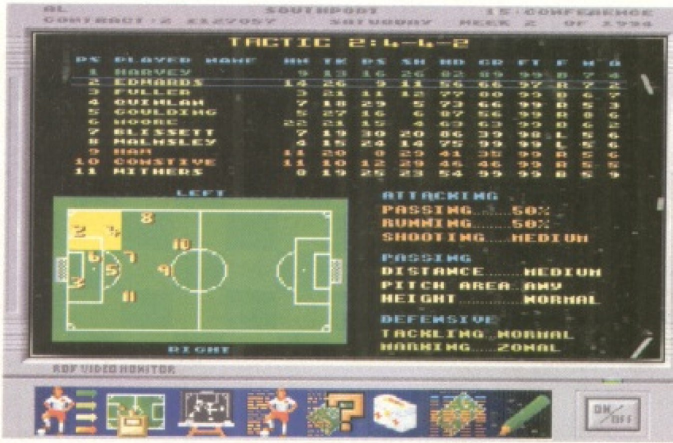

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              TACTIC 2:4-4-2
 1 HARVEY       9 13 16 26 82 89 99 R 7 4
 2 EDWARDS     14 26  9 11 56 66 97 R 7 2
 3 FULLER       3 21 11 12 77 80 99 R 6 7
 4 QUINLAN      7 18 29  5 73 66 99 R 5 3
 5 GOULDING     5 27 16  6 87 56 99 R 8 6
 6 MOORE       22 21 15  4 63 63 99 R 6 2
 7 BLISSETT     7 19 30 20 86 39 98 L 5 6
 8 WALMSLEY     4 15 24 14 75 99 99 L 5 6
 9 HAW         11 20  0 23 41 35 99 R 5 6
10 COMSTIVE    11 10 12 29 44 46 99 R 5 5
11 WITHERS      0 19 25 23 54 99 99 R 5 9

ATTACKING
PASSING......50%
RUNNING......50%
SHOOTING.....MEDIUM
PASSING
DISTANCE.......MEDIUM
PITCH AREA.....ANY
HEIGHT.........NORMAL
DEFENSIVE
TACKLING.......NORMAL
MARKING........ZONAL
```

Damp En

Once again X-Com agents are being called upon to defend the Earth from alien invasion. Dean Evans grabs his snorkel to discover just what terror lies lurking in the deep...

Seeking to take advantage of a weakened earth, X-Com's deep space foes have unexpectedly changed their strategy and they have launched a powerful second front against planet Earth. In the dark depths of vast oceans, long sleeping forces are awakened by re-animation signals sent out across the galactic silence by their interstellar brothers and sisters. Slowly but surely, an army of hibernating alien sea creatures awakens...

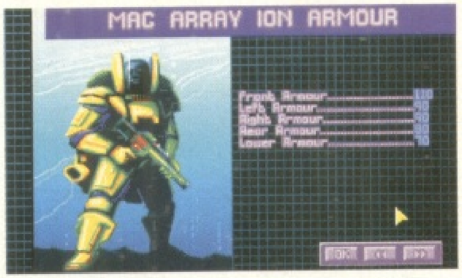
Since its release last year, UFO: Enemy Unknown has risen to cult status, and although at first glance the game doesn't look very pretty or indeed massively inspiring, this isometric, turn-based strategy game proved to be one of the most popular games of the year. Suddenly everybody was talking about it, because the longer you played it, the better and more absorbing it became. UFO wasn't the kind of game you could do justice to with only a couple of hours play. You had to spend days and weeks on it.

And so, for the past few months people have been speculating about the sequel. Terror From The Deep and UFO 2 are names that have been bandied around, but as the March release date slowly approaches, the follow-up to UFO is to be called X-Com: Terror From The Deep, and once again you get to take command of X-Com, a world-funded organisation being paid to shoot down UFO's, dissect aliens and pinch new and exciting extraterrestrial technologies. You see, Terror From The Deep isn't just a collection of extra missions set underwater against a bluey-green backdrop, it's a whole new game that serves up a much bigger tactical challenge.

Once again you will be called upon to defend the Earth from alien infestation and in Terror From The Deep, a mighty sleeping army of Lobstermen, ghostly spacesuits and jelly-fish brains has awoken. This time around the plot is just as weird at the first game and so if you want to prepare yourself for this underwater challenge, get out The Abyss, Deep Star Six and Leviathan on video, rent a couple of episodes of SeaQuest DSV and read 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea. It probably won't help, but at least it will get you in the mood.

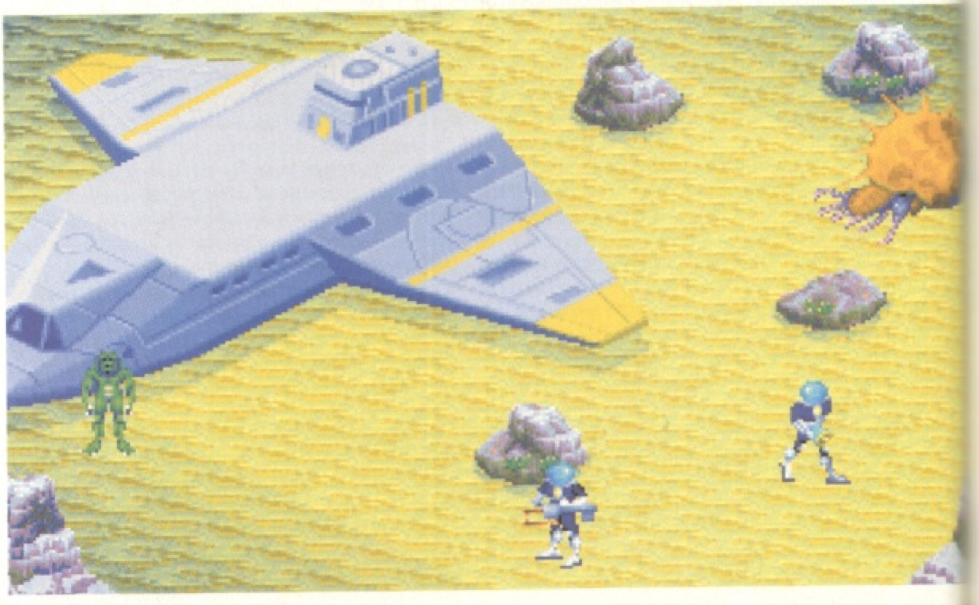
Still, I digress. About that plot... It appears that an alien colonisation vessel, called the T'Leth, crash landed on Earth some 65 million years ago and its emergency systems placed the aliens in suspended animation. A distress call was sent from the ship but sadly it was never received by the alien's homeworld. Over the aeons the computers have awoken small groups of aliens to attempt a colonisation, but the strategies and devices that they have used have been completely unsuccessful. What they have been good at, however, is sinking

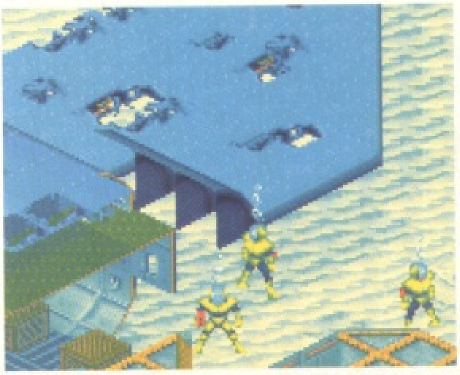
Game	X-COM:TERROR FROM THE DEEP
Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	In-house
Work *started*	March 1994
Due for *completion*	March 1995



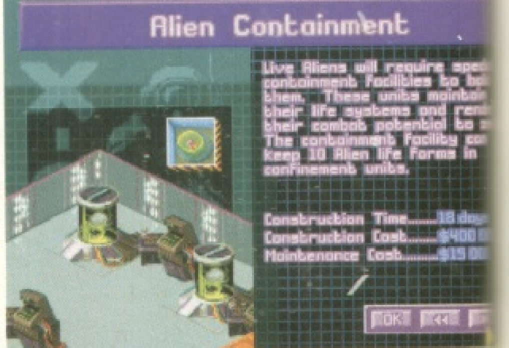
MAC ARRAY ION ARMOUR

Front Armour.......110
Left Armour.......90
Right Armour.......90
Rear Armour.......90
Lower Armour.......70





In Terror Fron The Deep you get to battle the alien menace underwater, in ship wrecks, lost cities and aboard ships.



Alien Containment

Live Aliens will require spe
containment facilities to h
them. These units maint
their life systems and re
their combat potential to
The containment facility c
keep 10 Alien life forms in
confinement units.

Construction Time......18 da
Construction Cost.......$400
Maintenance Cost........$15 0

The UFOpaedia has been revamped slightly to show you what a facility does, how much it costs and what it looks like.

counters

ships, so they can plunder their cargoes in search of gold – the base metal in the hyper-alloy Zrbite.

As Terror From The Deep begins, deep in the vast hulk of the T'Leth the battle computers have finally come fully online. The systematic awakening of all the aliens complete with new, powerful technology has begun.

"Terror from the deep uses the familiar UFO control system, multiple menus and a tactical icon bar," explains Jason Dutton at MicroProse. "But this time it's green. It's not just a data disk though, Terror expands and refines all aspects of the UFO system; the new UFOpaedia is more structured and incorporates a clear and more concise database, the tactical section uses multiple colour palettes and animations to conjure the atmosphere of the deep ocean, and the game features twice as many tactical sites and 10 times the level of animation. Terror from the deep expands the UFO game engine into new areas..."

> ***"Terror from the deep uses the familiar UFO control system, multiple menus and a tactical icon bar, but this time it's green. The game features twice as many tactical sites and 10 times the level of animation. Terror From The Deep expands the UFO game engine into new areas."***
>
> Jason Dutton,
> PR Manager, MicroProse

Like the first game, in Terror From The Deep you must build a number of floating bases around the globe so you can successfully track the underwater UFO menace. Once you've detected a likely candidate you can launch an attack sub to intercept it. If you succeed the next step is to send out the Triton transport submarine, complete with a squad of highly-trained frogmen.

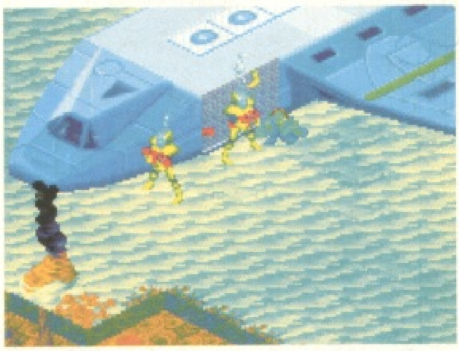
At an alien crash site, the game switches to the familiar 3D isometric view and the ensuing battles are conducted on a turn basis, with each of your soldiers having a certain number of "action points" which they use up by moving, turning and firing. But, again, saving the Earth is a lengthy process. New bases must be built, weapons must be improved, technologies must be pinched and finances must be shrewdly juggled.

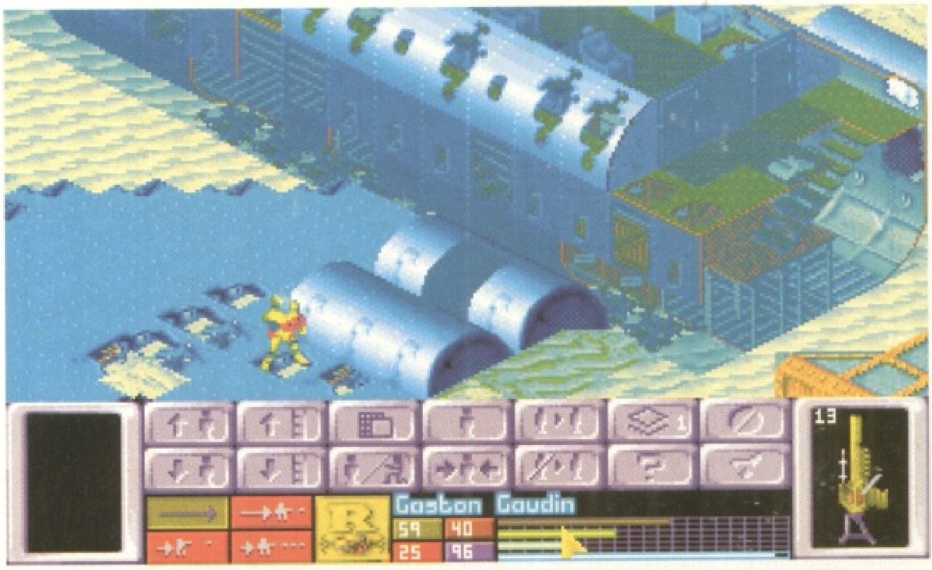
"The alien strategy is divided into in two distinct parts," reveals Jason Dutton. "The first objective is to set up bases in strategic locations around the globe. The second and most dangerous part of their plan is to recover certain 'artifacts' that will allow the aliens to re-energise the core of T'Leth and awaken the Great Dreamer, the ultimate alien, whose darkness will engulf the globe. As the commander of X-Com, you have to fight these aliens with new technologies, using weapons for aquatic warfare, submarines and floating bases dotted around the world."

Even at these early stages, you can see that Terror From The Deep features several new effects including suitably bubbly water effects, multi-level tactical maps, new alien life forms with new technologies and weaponry (subs, tanks, gas-powered weapons that leave a wake as they tear through the water), and loads of new missions. In Terror From The Deep you're not just restricted to underwater missions, there are surface missions, skirmishes aboard ships, battles in ports, fights on islands and adventure in ship wrecks.

"Awakened by the cosmic emissions of their brothers, the X-Com organisation must face a new terror, an army of aliens that are already here, but in an environment more deadly than deep space."

Yes, er, right. And that's all I'm going to say about Terror From The Deep for now, because the game will (hopefully) be released in April, and we'll have a full and in-depth review of the game in the next issue of PC GAMES. We'll also be taking a look at the follow-up to Terror From The Deep, tentatively entitled X-Com: The Apocalypse, which MicroProse suggest might dump the turn-based combat system and plump for real-time, Syndicate-style action instead. Pick up a copy of PC GAMES next month and find out.





Setting the missions underwater has given MicroProse the opportunity to introduce both some new weapons and some strange, new alien life-forms. They're not going to be a push-over, however, Terror From The Deep will be just as tough as UFO.

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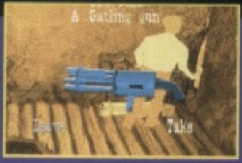
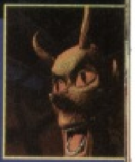
reviews

Doom is finally superseded by Id's Heretic, while platform perfection finally reaches the PC in the form of Aladdin and The Lion King.





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The coveted PC GAMES STAR is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any games-player's software collection.

PC GAMES STAR

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).

So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

The whole PC GAMES team plays every game reviewed and, although only one person's name appears on each review, the criticisms and Overall mark reflect all of our combined opinions, hopefully giving you a balanced view. Should any team member disagree violently with the rest, his comments will appear in a special box in the review.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommended by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

WING COMMANDER 3 CD

ELECTRONIC ARTS/ORIGIN

(0753) 549442

£54.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

50MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM, 20Mb of hard disk space, double-speed CD-ROM drive and joystick.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; SVGA; almost every major soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- At last — an 'interactive movie' that actually looks like a movie.
- The dogfighting is tense, exciting and looks fabulous.
- Intriguing plot that keep you hooked from the start.
- Superb SVGA graphics and excellent sound.

...AND THE BAD

- Needs a monster PC to run at anything near a playable speed.
- The missions lack depth and variety.

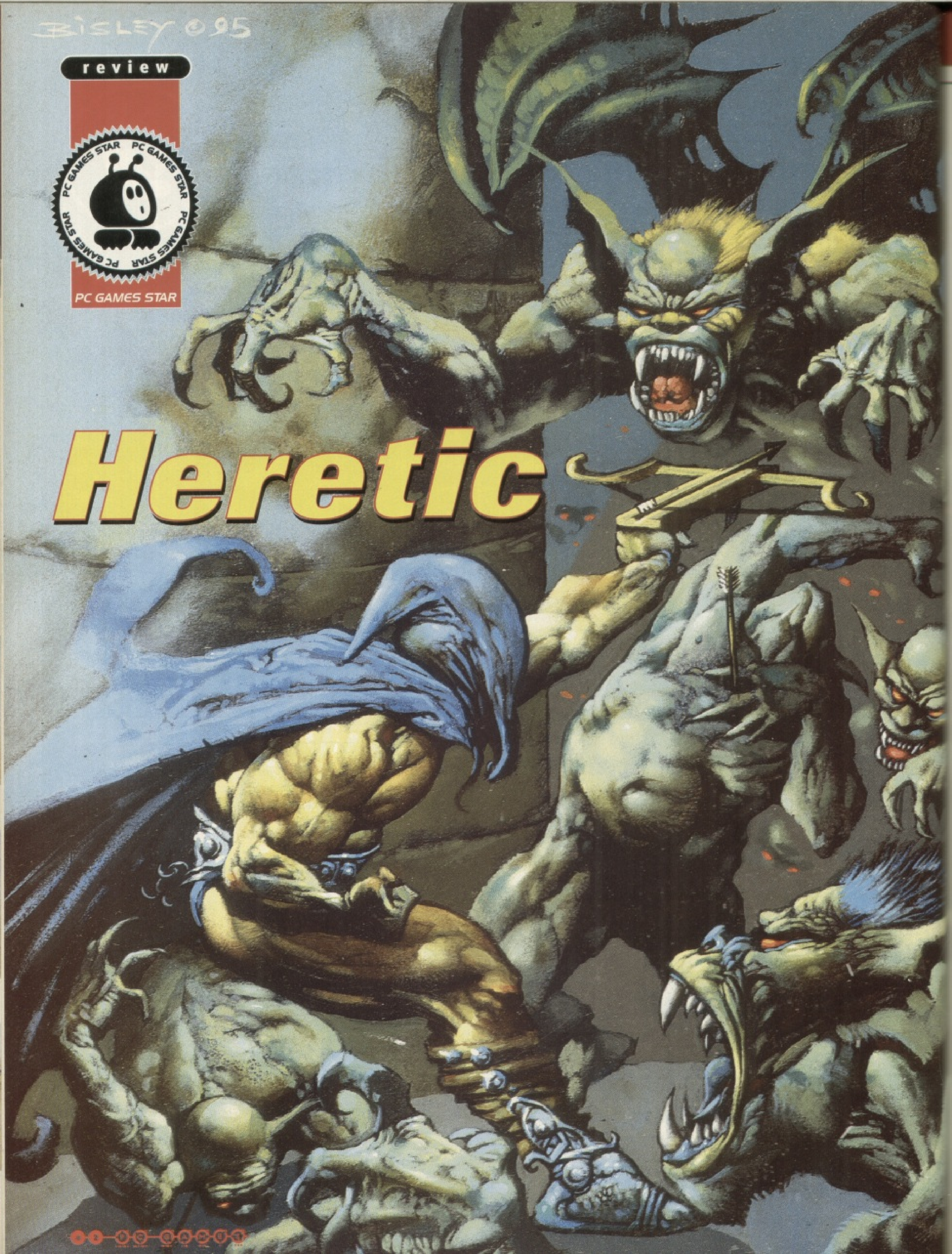
Overall

92%

review

PC GAMES STAR

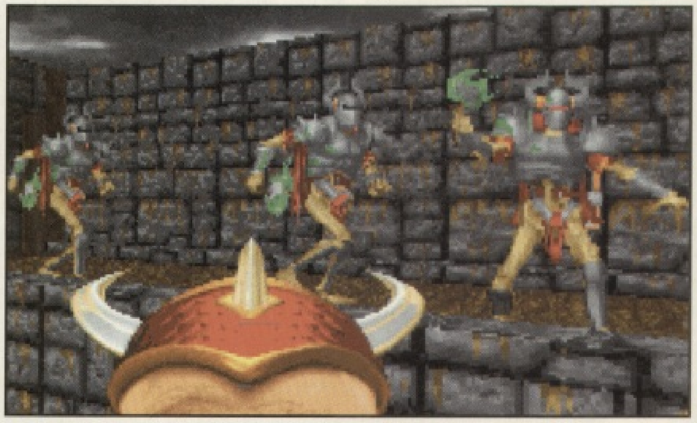
Heretic



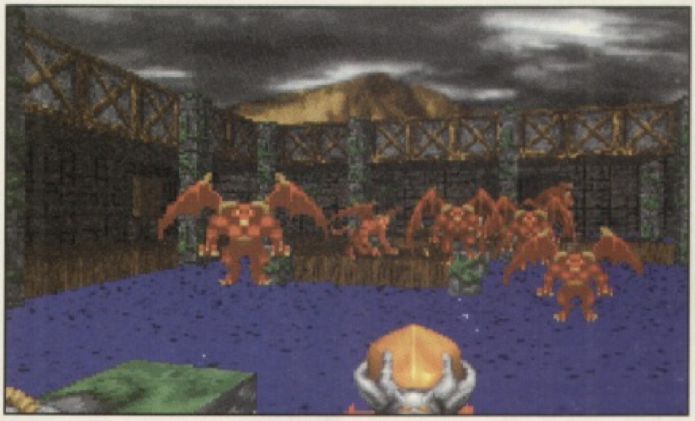
Something Wicked This Way Comes...

Is there life after Doom? Dean Evans grabs his crossbow for the ultimate fantasy blast-fest.

This impressive-looking weapon is the mighty Dragon Claw which fires bolts of blue energy at your enemies. Power it up with a Tome of Power, however, and it also fires small maces...



The attention to detail in Heretic is stunning. Shoot these red demon-things and they'll tumble into the water with a splash. It's a shame the Elevenwand isn't a more spectacular weapon.



If you're a Doom veteran — and this sweeping statement probably refers to a fair few thousand of you — you've probably heard about Id Software's latest 3D combat game, Heretic. Yes, of course you have. As you're reading this very magazine you can't have failed to notice that there's a demo of the game on the coverdisks this month, and that the word 'Heretic' is emblazoned on the cover in big, yellow lettering.

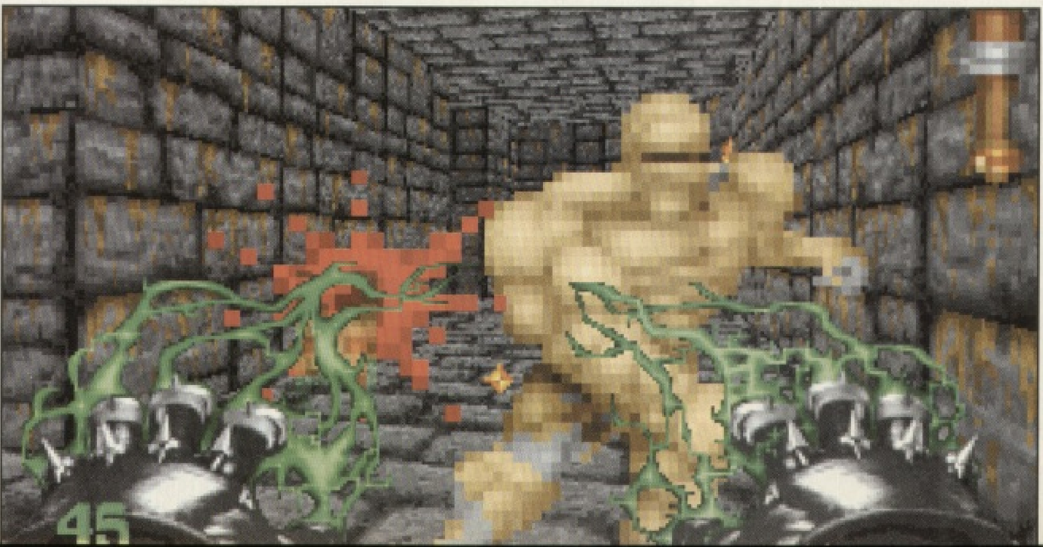
But if you haven't seen it before (where have you been?), let me explain that Heretic, like Doom, is a fast-moving 3D shoot-'em-up, where you run around numerous levels, packing a huge variety of powerful weapons, shooting creatures, demons and other satanic monstrosities. It's very simple stuff — locked doors are colour-coded and can only be opened with the correctly coloured key, there are secret passages to be found, magic items, weapons power-ups, invisibility and invincibility bonuses to be discovered, and the game can be played over a null-modem link or an IPX network supporting up to four separate players.

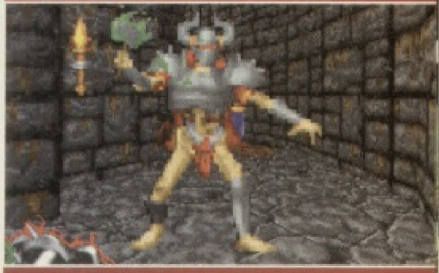
With Cooperative and Deathmatch play and the options to respawn monsters, warp to levels and eventually to add external PWADs, Heretic is, to all intents and purposes, a medieval version of Doom. It's perhaps a little less violent and maybe a bit rougher around the edges, and the basic gameplay is the same and the controls are identical, but there are a few notable differences that make Heretic well worth having a good, long look at.

Firstly and most importantly, Heretic allows the player to move the view vertically, enabling you to look up and down. Of course, Origin's System Shock does this, as does LucasArts' Dark Forces, and while it may seem a simple movement to add, it's no small achievement. Co-developer Raven has tweaked the Doom 3D engine considerably and now, instead of using two-dimensional sprites in the game like Doom, all of the monsters and characters in Heretic are full 3D objects.

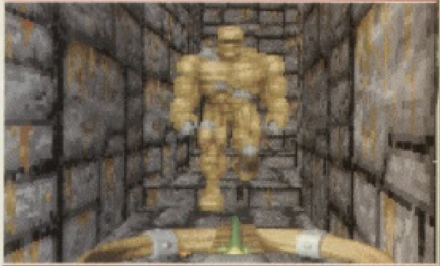
With the player able to look up and down, using 3D objects is vital because the monsters can be now seen from a variety of different angles. In Doom, for example, if you stand above an Imp you don't see the top of it's head, you see the same old 2D bitmap image, scaled down to give the illusion of depth.

In Heretic, on the other hand, if you look down at any of the monsters in the game you will be able to see the top of their heads and their shoulders (if they have any). Obviously, while this makes for some interesting single-player combat, the ability to snipe at your opponent from a high vantage point is invaluable in Deathmatch competitions.

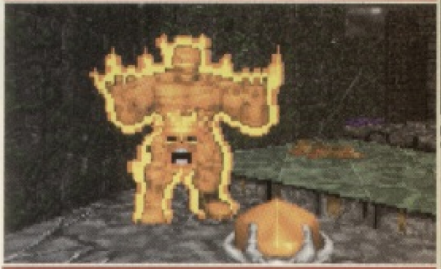




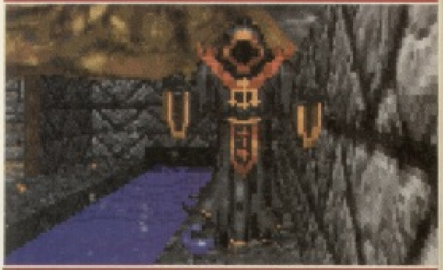
The Knight is a tricky customer as he's got an unlimited supply of flaming hand-axes.



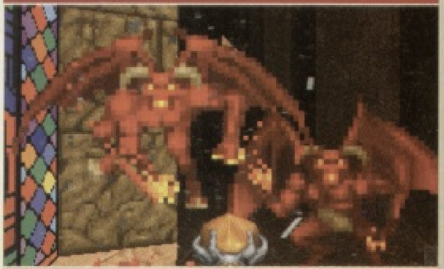
Slow, stupid and easy to kill, the Golem will try to beat you to death with its huge fists.



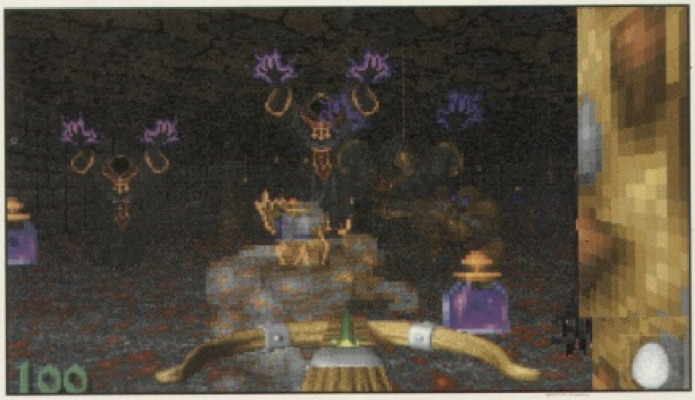
On later levels the monsters get harder to kill. This Golem now throws fire at you.



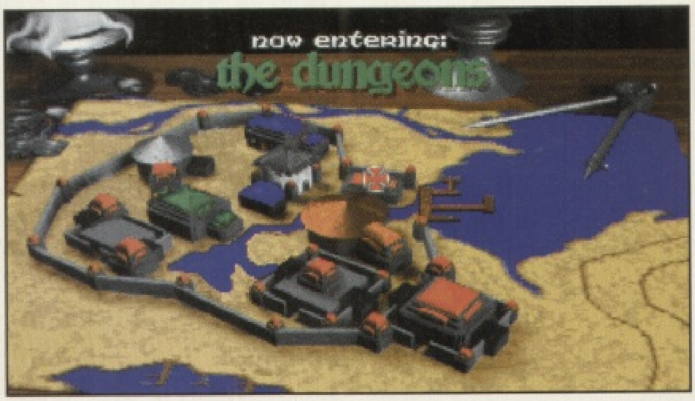
The Wizard is a faceless enemy who fires purple balls of fire. A nasty piece of work.



Demons, Imps, call them what you will. They buzz around you like flies around...



(Above) On the last few levels of the City Of The Damned, not only do the bad guys get harder to kill, they're also harder to see because they're partially invisible.
(Below) The full, registered version of Heretic features three episodes; The City Of The Damned, Hell's Maw and The Dome Of D'Sporil. That's 27 massive levels!



Like Doom, Heretic also features a variety of weapons, of which four are available to you in the Shareware version of the game. There are seven weapons in total and they are, in order of destruction: the bog-standard wooden Staff, the powerful Gauntlets Of The Necromancer, the Elvenwand, the Ethereal Crossbow, the Dragon Claw, the Hell Staff and the big, vapourise-the-little-buggers Phoenix Rod. Sadly, both the Hell Staff and the Phoenix Rod are only available in Episodes 2 and 3, both of which can only be found in the registered version of Heretic.

As an indication of their relative strengths, the Staff is the equivalent of bare fists in Doom, while the Gauntlets Of The Necromancer are a short-range weapon and as deadly as the old chainsaw. The Elvenwand is slow-firing and about as effective as the Doom pistol, while the Ethereal Crossbow is the fantasy equivalent of the shotgun. Lastly, in the Shareware version of Heretic, the Dragon Claw is the machine gun, but it often seems less powerful than the Crossbow is.

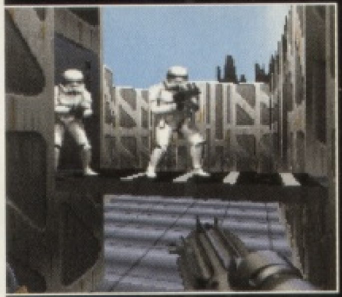
Heretic also features a wide variety of useful objects, and by far the most handy (apart from the vials of health and the medipack Quartz flasks) is the Tome Of Power. Grabbing this rotating black book allows you to power-up any one of your weapons for a short amount of time. For example, if you activate the Tome Of Power on the Ethereal Crossbow, the bow's firepower is effectively doubled for the duration of the power-up. Any of your weapons can be powered-up in this way, and this compensates somewhat for the fact that Heretic's major weaponry is rigidly Doom-like and a tiny bit unimaginative.

Doom, Doom,
Shake, Shake The Room...

Doom has got a lot to answer for. Ever since it burst onto the PC, almost every software company has tried tinkering with a 3D game engine that's "not like Doom at all." Well, although some Doom clones are awful, others can stand proudly on their own merits, and if you're looking for some more first-person perspective action, why not take a look at these...

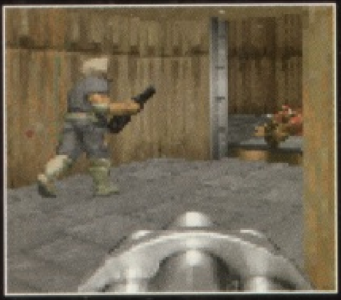
DARK FORCES

Doom with stormtroopers, TIE Fighters, etc.



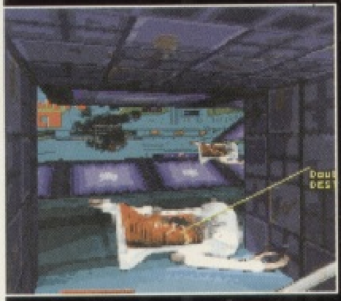
DOOM

The original and, some still say, the best.



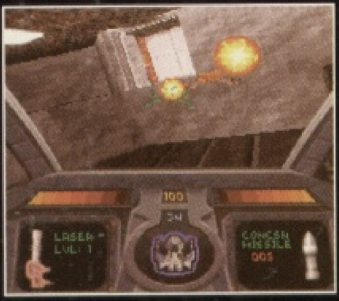
SYSTEM SHOCK

The thinking man's Doom.



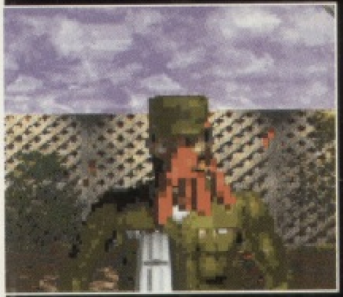
DESCENT

Doom in a small spaceship.



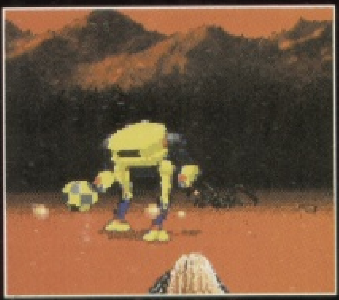
DR RADIAKI

Doom with crap graphics and no playability.



VIRTUOSO

Doom with a bloke that looks like Bon Jovi.

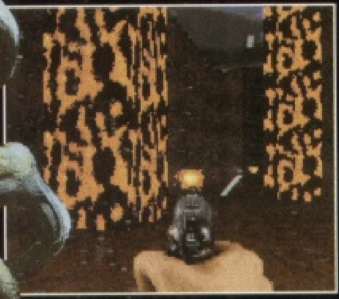


QUAKE (coming soon)

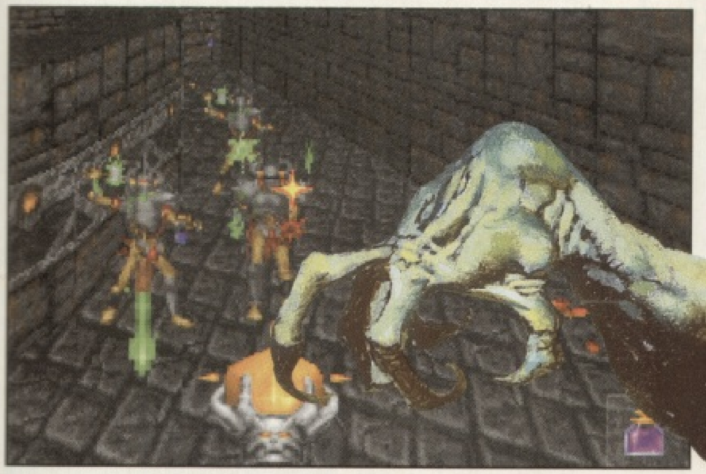
Doom, the next generation...

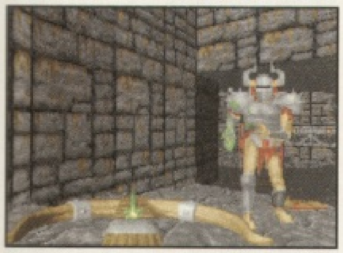
RISE OF THE TRIAD

Doom with Mortal Kombat-style bad guys.

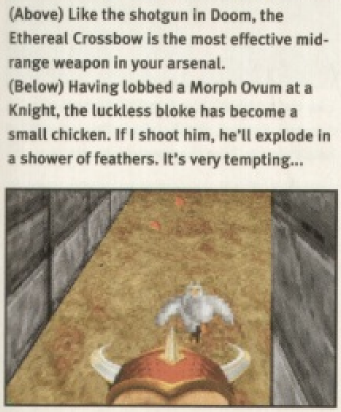


One of the revolutionary things about Heretic is the fact that you can look up and down. Like System Shock and the forthcoming Dark Forces, it opens up a whole new dimension of gameplay (mostly up) and makes Deathmatch competitions even more tense and exciting.



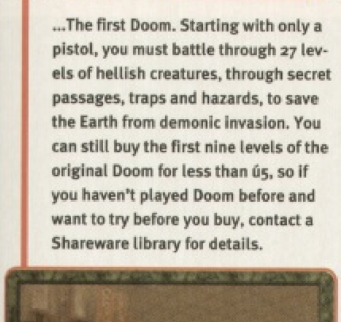


(Above) Like the shotgun in Doom, the Ethereal Crossbow is the most effective mid-range weapon in your arsenal.
(Below) Having lobbed a Morph Ovum at a Knight, the luckless bloke has become a small chicken. If I shoot him, he'll explode in a shower of feathers. It's very tempting...



It's a bit like...

...The first Doom. Starting with only a pistol, you must battle through 27 levels of hellish creatures, through secret passages, traps and hazards, to save the Earth from demonic invasion. You can still buy the first nine levels of the original Doom for less than ú5, so if you haven't played Doom before and want to try before you buy, contact a Shareware library for details.



Most of the objects that you come across in Heretic can be stored in your handy player inventory for later use. Like Doom, Heretic has invisibility and invincibility power-ups, an enchanted shield providing the fantasy equivalent of armour, the Wings Of Wrath allowing you to fly for a short period of time and the Bomb Of The Ancients, a brilliantly useful time bomb that you can drop behind you to blow up pursuing monsters and, more importantly, unwary Deathmatch opponents.

But by far the most amusing weapon in Heretic, the one that always gives Deathmatch games the humorous edge over Doom and Rise Of The Triad, is the superbly powerful Morph Ovum. Okay, at first glance, the Morph Ovum is just a big, glowing egg — but if you pick it up and fire it at a monster (or a close personal friend), the unfortunate target will be transformed into a helpless chicken, losing all weapons, power-ups, bonuses, etc. Needless to say, the Morph Ovum is a highly treasured weapon in Heretic Deathmatch contests, where friendships have been won and lost on a cluck and a prayer.

Obviously, while Heretic is a good one-player game, like Doom it's at its best when played via a null-modem cable or over a network. With this in mind, Raven has designed some particularly fiendish levels for the game, with all manner of secret rooms, teleports, sniper's positions and one-way walls.

After playing Doom and Doom 2: Hell On Earth, I guess I have to admit that Deathmatch games in Heretic are a lot more fun. You can kill your opponent with the dreaded Morph Ovum, fly around using the Wings Of Wrath, leave time bombs in strategic places or just power-up your Gauntlets and indulge in a little close-quarters fighting for the hell of it.

Well, you've probably played it by now, what do you think? Me? I first thought it was terrible. I thought that the graphics weren't up to Doom standards and the weapons were weak and somewhat ineffective. But I've played it a bit more since then and I must admit that it's grown on me. I'm still a fan of Doom and nothing will replace my affection for the deadly double-barrelled shotgun, but there's something about Heretic that keeps me coming back for more. It's something I can't quite put my finger on.

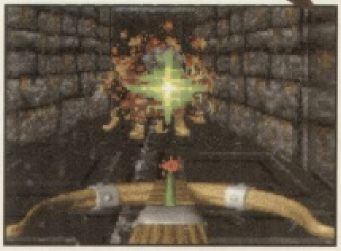
Maybe it's the fact that all of the weapons are new, that the monsters are new and that the levels are new. Or maybe it's just that I have a long-lasting image of Alex transformed into a chicken, flying about using the Wings Of Wrath, desperately trying to avoid the streams of blue energy flowing out of my Dragon Claw.

As a Shareware release, Heretic is a very good game and, although it didn't cause quite the same excitement as Doom did when it first appeared on the scene, the crossbows and crackling gauntlets make a nice change from the old chainguns and rocket launchers.

So far, the levels I've seen are big and suitably challenging and Heretic should keep even the most hardened Doom player occupied for at least a couple of nights on the trot. And, of course, by the time you read this, you should be able to order the full version of Heretic direct from your local Shareware library, so you'll be able to play episodes 2 and 3 and play around with the Hell Staff and the Phoenix Rod.

Heretic isn't going to replace Doom, but I think that it complements it nicely and that it's a lot more fun to play than Apogee's new Doom clone, Rise Of The Triad. Still, I've no idea why I'm rambling on about Heretic because you've got the game on your PC by now and so I've no need to give you the hard sell.

Whatever you think of it, try to play Heretic on Deathmatch mode if you get the chance. It's a totally different experience to Doom. And if you do play against a friend, don't forget about the chicken bombs...



Kill a Golem and he'll explode, freeing his, er, grey ghost thing which rises to heaven.

HERETIC

ID SOFTWARE/RAVEN

N/A

£N/A OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 7Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis Ultrasound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Doom in a fantasy setting. What more can I say?
- You can look up and down in Heretic.
- Lots of power-ups and objects like time bombs, chicken bombs and weapon power-ups.

...AND THE BAD

- Not as insanely addictive as Doom.
- Very Doom-like — could have been more imaginative.

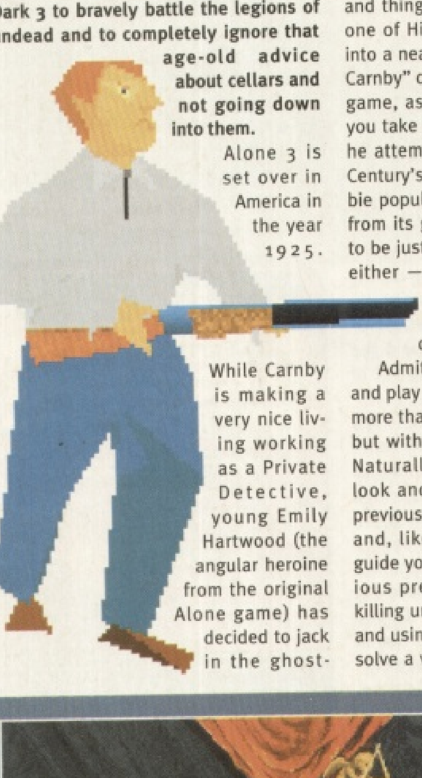
Overall

91%

Alone In The Dark 3 CD

With his cowboy hat and six-shooter, Dean Evans cleans up the town in Infogrames' third and final Alone In The Dark game.

After the haunted house antics of Alone In The Dark and the ghostly pirates and voodoo mysticism that featured prominently in the sequel Alone 2, Edward Carnby returns once again in the imaginatively Alone In The Dark 3 to bravely battle the legions of undead and to completely ignore that age-old advice about cellars and not going down into them.



Alone 3 is set over in America in the year 1925.

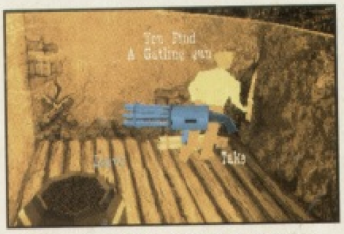
While Carnby is making a very nice living working as a Private Detective, young Emily Hartwood (the angular heroine from the original Alone game) has decided to jack in the ghost-busting business to seek fame and fortune in Hollywood. As luck would have it, she gets hired as a script girl by a small studio called Hill Century, and within a week she's been whisked away to the blasted beauty of the Mojave Desert to join a film crew shooting a new Western.

But after a couple of weeks, all contact with the crew is mysteriously lost, and things start to look ominous when one of Hill Century's horses stumbles into a nearby town with the words "Call Carnby" carved deep into its saddle. The game, as they say, is now a-foot, and you take control of the polygon hero as he attempts to rescue Emily, save Hill Century's cash, decimate the local zombie population and finally free the town from its ghostly curse. This isn't going to be just another missing persons case either — you can expect to encounter strange forces, unexplainable phenomena and big dribbly candles in abundance.

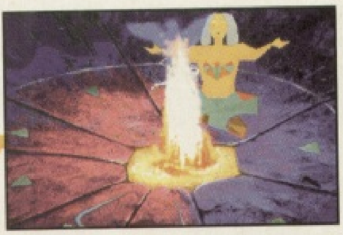
Admittedly, when you first sit down and play Alone 3, it seems little more than a reworked Alone 1 but with zombie cowboys. Naturally, it retains the look and feel of the two previous Infogrames games and, like Alones 1 and 2, you must guide your polygon hero through various pre-rendered 3D locations, killing undead polygonal monsters and using polygonal objects to solve a variety of puzzles. As for the plot, I'm not going to say too much about it (discovering the story is half the fun), but needless to say, it's tortuous and continually surprising.

And that's really about it. Take away the striking 3D graphics and the arty camera angles that the Alone games are famous for and Alone 3 is just a traditional, object-based adventure game. Unlike Alone 2, which was a blast-fest of almost impossible proportions, Alone 3 makes a welcome return to the puzzle-orientated gameplay that characterised the first game and, although the characters are different and the music has changed, I really can't see much difference between the two.

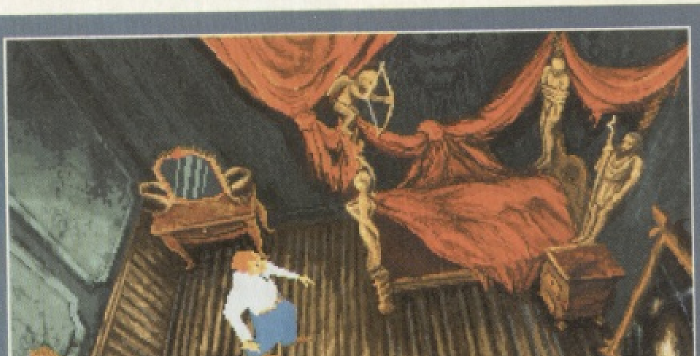
However, this similarity is not necessarily a bad thing. Like many people I didn't like Alone 2 as much as the original game, mainly because it had dumped the quirky puzzles in favour of more gunplay and fighting. Alone 2 was also very difficult (it took me two days just to get through the maze at the beginning) and so it's nice to see that Infogrames has listened to criticism and has gone back to the ideals of the first release,



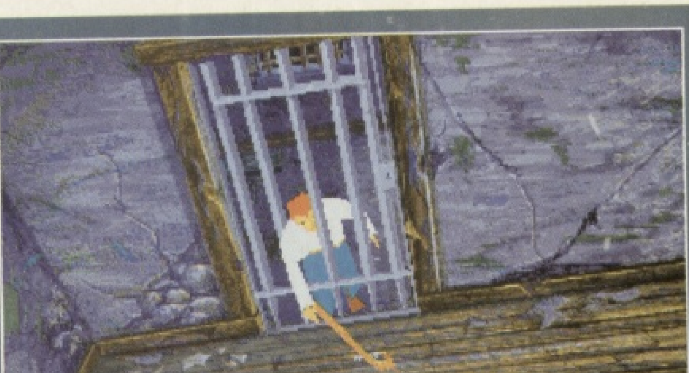
Like the previous Alone In The Dark games, Carnby will need some serious firepower if he's going to beat the cowboys in Alone 3.



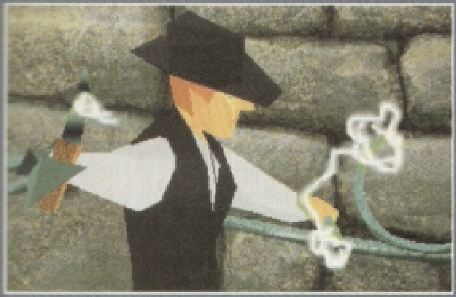
Strange lights in the sky, reincarnation and a Red Indian chief who can make bird patterns in the fire. He does children's parties too.



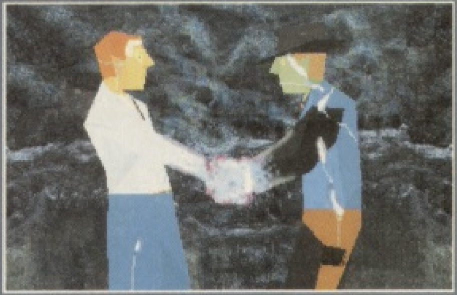
Okay, first you find the arrow then you give it to the bowman and he'll... oh, never mind.

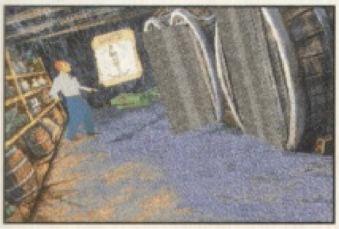


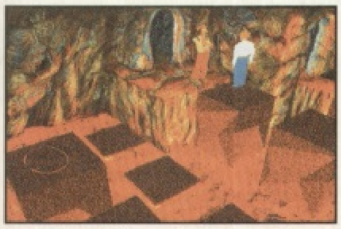
Carnby uses his cane to grab the keys to his cell before a zombie appears and shoots him.

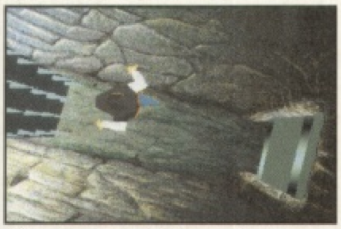

Carnby prepares to electrocute an old friend as he struggles towards the end of his quest.

A pretty sunset. Carnby has been crushed, shot at, punched, kicked and zapped into a Cougar. It's all in a day's work.


Carnby meets his evil twin brother. "Put her there, bro'," he says and something strange and bizarre happens. As usual.


According to tradition, Alone 3 also has its fair share of weird, unearthly monsters. What was it about not going down into the cellar?

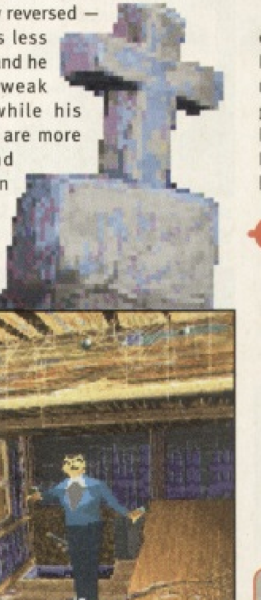

Ah, it's the old "jump-the-platforms-and-talk-to-the-mystical-Indian" routine. Be careful — one false move and it's into the lava...


Where Alone In The Dark 2 was shoot, run about a bit, shoot, shoot, Alone 3 has some difficult puzzles like this tricky problem here.

reintroducing more suspense, a bit of tension and some polygonal pant-wetting terror.

It's not a bad effort, either. Alone In The Dark 3 is an engaging and absorbing game and, if you've played either of the previous two adventures, you'll be instantly familiar with the controls and the gameplay. If you're not, then Alone 3 is the perfect game to introduce you to the series. It's not easy by any stretch of the imagination, but with this third and last instalment in the Alone saga, Infogrames has made a considerable effort to make it simple to use and fun to play.

For example, before you start a new game, you can choose any one of three difficulty levels. On the Easy level, Carnby has more life points and can inflict more damage, while his zombie adversaries are fairly feeble and cause less injury to Carnby. On the Normal level, everything is equal and you take your chances in combat, while on the Hard level, the Easy set-up is totally reversed — Carnby has less life points and he has fairly weak attacks, while his opponents are more deadly and effective in battle.



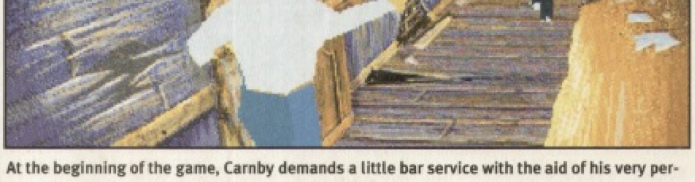
And, in addition to all this Alone In The Dark 3 features an overhead map, so you can find you way around the town; the Open/Search command (missing from Alone 2) has been reintroduced, allowing you to rifle through cupboards and peek inside chests and boxes and finally Infogrames has also included a number of pre-saved games, so you can jump ahead and play a different part of the story if you're finding any of the early sections a bit too tough.

But if Alone 3 has all the good points of the original game, it also has a few of the bad ones as well. The flicking camera view, while initially impressive, can make combat frustratingly difficult and some objects can only be picked up if you're standing, with pixel-perfection, in exactly the right place. This can get very irritating, especially as using and manipulating objects makes up such a huge part of the game. But I guess that's the price you pay for the game's unique style and you've just got to learn to tolerate it.

All in all, Alone In The Dark 3 is an excellent game. There's lots of strange Red Indian mysticism, holy trinkets, reincarnation and all the usual weird goings-on that you'd expect to find in an Infogrames adventure. Best of all, Infogrames has combined the puzzle-based gameplay of the first game with the size and scope of the second. Alone 3 is huge and while it doesn't do anything radically new or exciting, it's a challenging, easy-to-use game with some nice effects and, of course, digitised speech throughout.

So, if you liked Ecstatica but thought that it was over too quickly or you've heard about the Alone In The Dark phenomenon and want to see what all the fuss is about, then Alone In The Dark 3 is the game for you.

Although it hasn't been the focus of a rumbling hype machine like Wing Commander 3 or Inferno, it's big, it's challenging and it's beautifully presented. Okay, as I've said, it doesn't pull down its trousers and wiggle the boxer shorts of innovation, but it's a fun game to play and, with three different difficulty levels, it's a game that will take you weeks to complete. All in all, it's very nice. Very nice indeed.


At the beginning of the game, Carnby demands a little bar service with the aid of his very persuasive .38 Special. Typically, he doesn't notice the zombie cowboy on the balcony above.

It's a bit like...

...Ecstatica. Like Alone In The Dark, the Psygnosis thriller uses rendered backgrounds, polygonal (okay, ellipsoid) characters and arty camera angles to create a very atmospheric adventure game. Like Alone 3, Ecstatica is set in a small town, which hides a deep, dark secret. Why do demons wander the streets? Why does every homeowner appear to be impaled on a garden implement? Why not journey into Ecstatica and find out...

ALONE IN THE DARK 3^{CD}

INFOGRAMES/IN-HOUSE

(0171) 738 8199

£44.99 OUT MARCH

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 15Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Alone 3 returns to the tense, puzzle-based gameplay of the original.
- Again, the story is suitably strange and very well plotted.

...AND THE BAD

- It's just a reworked Alone In The Dark but with cowboys.
- Some of the puzzles are a little obscure.

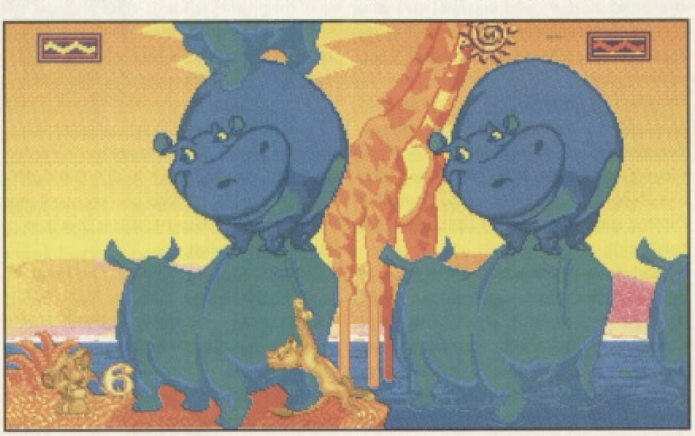
Overall

89%

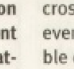
The Lion King

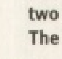
Having seen The Lion King some 53 times, Alex Simmons was the perfect candidate to look at Disney's beautiful platformer.

(Below) Simba just can't wait to be King, swinging from rhino's tails and leaping across the heads of the giraffe. Don't fall into the water, though — the little lion cub can't swim!



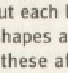
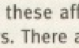
I may be in my twenties, but I'm not ashamed to admit that I like cartoons. The Lion King was brilliant, a real achievement in terms of stunning computer-generated animation. Amazingly the game is visually almost as impressive, for a platform game anyway. Once again, however, it's that old chestnut gameplay which seems to have slightly overlooked. Virgin managed to balance the two in Aladdin, so what happened with The Lion King?



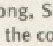
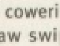


Unlike Aladdin, The Lion King is fairly tough, packed with some ten levels of frustrating platform action. Adhering to the plot of the film relatively closely, the game follows Simba from when he's a cub, into the Pride Lands, through the spooky elephant graveyard and up until the final confrontation with his evil uncle, Scar.

As a cutesy cub, Simba bounds along like a playful kitten, knocking off all the blood-sucking bugs that nip at his energy bar by pouncing on their bonces. He can also make use of his pathetic roar to temporarily stun them, or flatten them by curling into a ball and 'rolling' over the enemy. Clambering up trees and swinging from rhino tails to avoid drowning in the glistening water, Simba must perform pixel-perfect jumps to cross these gaping chasms. If you miss, even by a little bit, the lion cub will tumble down to his death.

Throughout each level, power-ups of various shapes and sizes can be found, and these affect Simba in a variety of ways. There are many different types of beetle  bonus, most of which top up his  energy bar or simply increase the power of Simba's lame roar. Extra lives are scarce but obviously valuable, as are the Continue power-ups which appear as a 'circle of life'. There are also special icons that activate bonus games, of which there are two.

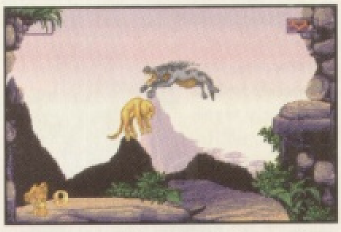
In these bonus rounds you control either the merecat Timon or the gaseous wart-hog Pumbaa. Playing against the clock, additional lives can be earned by catching the juicy beetles in your gaping gob, while carefully avoiding the poisonous bugs.

Thankfully, The Lion King isn't just level after level of similar platform tedium, as Simba soon discovers as he's chased down into a canyon by Scar's hyenas. The buffalo are stampeding and Simba must avoid the trampling hooves of the herd while jumping over the boulders to avoid stumbling. This 3D chase sequence is sadly over all too soon, and within minutes Simba must return to sideways-scrolling platform normality as he's chased off into the sunset by the hyenas. During the following mid-game platform stages, Simba meets Timon and Pumbaa, and slowly grows in size and power from a  puny cub, maturing into a fully  grown Felis Leo whose destiny is to return to Pride Rock and reclaim that which is rightfully his.

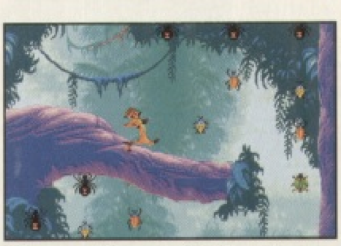
Now he's big and strong, Simba's thundering roar will terrify the cowering hyenas, while his deadly claw swipe now proves more deadly than any pathetic head-pounce. However, despite your new found strength, the Lion King's enemies are stronger than before, and the evil Scar will only bow down to the true king if Simba manages to defeat him in combat.

Like Aladdin and indeed the film, The Lion King is graphically excellent. The animation is fluid and, quite simply, superb. But it's the background scenery which I found even more impressive, recreating the 'feel' of the movie perfectly. For example, the Elephant graveyard is both dark and haunting, while the second stage, entitled Can't Wait To Be King, is almost psychedelic, bright and vibrant to match the accompanying musical score. In fact, most of the songs featured in the game are from the film, albeit simplified and without all the Tim Rice and Elton John lyrics.

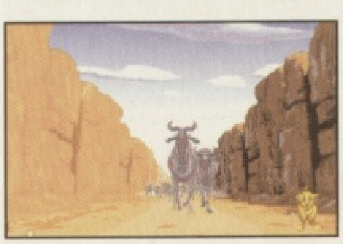
However, it's the gameplay which isn't quite up to standard, though. Aladdin played like a dream, but The Lion King is *incredibly* frustrating. Having said that, the game presents more of a challenge than Aladdin did, and if it proves anything it shows that platform games *can* be done well on the PC.



Simba ain't laughing when the hyena makes his end-of-level attack.



Timon runs riot on one of the bonus stages.



Run Simba, run Simba, run, run, run... Eek! The buffalo are stampeding!

THE LION KING

VIRGIN/EAST POINT SOFTWARE

(0181) 960 2255

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; gamepad; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- The animation in The Lion King is to die for. Almost.
- Variation between the levels means The Lion King is more than just your average platformer.

...AND THE BAD

- Sometimes it's incredibly frustrating to play.

Overall

72%

Aladdin

Alex Simmons, a diamond in the rough, enters the cave of wonders in search of platform perfection.

Everything you know is wrong. Well, almost. Aladdin rewrites the rules of PC platform games, because it's actually very good. No, honestly, it is. In fact I'd dare to say it's probably the best platformer on the PC, and that it even overshadows its bouncing brother, The Lion King.

Aladdin looks, and feels for that matter, very much like a console game, which is hardly surprising considering it made its debut on the Mega Drive. Visually slick but above all great fun to play, it features some 11 levels which follows Aladdin's search for the delectable Princess Jasmine.

The first level takes place in the city of Agrabah, which is no place for a thieving street rat as Aladdin soon discovers. Jafar's guards chase him across hot coals and through swarms of street performers and our baggy-trousered hero must avoid falling baskets and knifes thrown by turban-wearing jugglers. Aladdin can also use his scimitar to slice through pursuing thugs or he can knock 'em for six by throwing the apples which are scattered around the market.

Apples are just one of the many collectible bonuses found in the game. Hearts boost energy, while extra lives are earned by grabbing the Aladdin icons. Smart bombs appear in the form of black lamps, and the blue vases act as restart points should a life be lost. If you grab a Genie token, you can try your luck on the fruit machine bonus game in which lives and apples can be won. Finally, there's also Abu's bonus stage, where various power-ups can be nabbed by using the cheeky monkey to catch the gems while dodging the Sultan's enthusiastic guards.

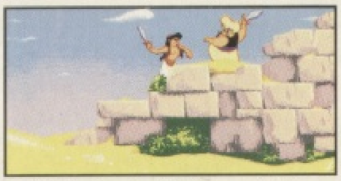
Back to Agrabah, having collected both parts of the sacred Scarab from the desert, Aladdin must race across the roof-tops to avoid the end-of-level guardian, namely the captain of the guards, Razoul.

The early levels are all remarkably similar, and it's not until the fourth stage that a little variation is introduced. In the dark corners of the Sultan's dungeon, bats swoop down from the shadows to nip away at Aladdin's energy. The boy wonder must leap between moving platforms and bound past sharp spikes which spring from the walls. Later Aladdin must escape from the Cave of Wonders, riding the magic carpet through a maze of tight tunnels as a huge wave of boiling lava rushes towards him. Fast, smooth scrolling make this section an exciting change from the humdrum platform normality, which Aladdin eventually returns to when he gets to the magnificent halls of the Sultan's palace.

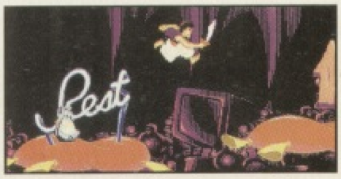
While all this would fail to impress console owners, you'd be hard-pressed to find a platformer that's as good as this on the PC. Okay, It may not be original (although the rug ride is something not usually seen in this type of game), but it looks pretty damn good and it's a joy to play.

Graphically it's not quite as good as Virgin's other platformer, The Lion King, but it still has the fluid animation and movie-like backdrops which make Disney's games so visually appealing. The sound, too, is extremely good, with a different instrumental track taken from the film to complement each of the game's levels. However, remember to grab a barf bag for the title music, a sickening rendition of 'A Whole New World' complete with the puke-inducing lyrics!

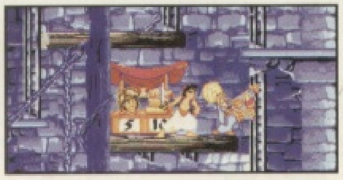
One of the few criticisms I can find with Aladdin is that it's all a bit too easy and over too soon. I managed to progress through to the eighth level within a couple of hours of playing, although the changeable difficulty levels allow you to increase the challenge, albeit only slightly. Overall, Aladdin is a fine platform game and one which stands proud against the usually superior console platformers.



Spill fat boy's guts with nifty sword-slicing.



Grab the genie head for a bonus round.



Find enough gems and you can purchase wishes or lives from the peddlar.

ALADDIN

VIRGIN/JAGUAR

(081) 960 2255

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystivk; gamepad; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

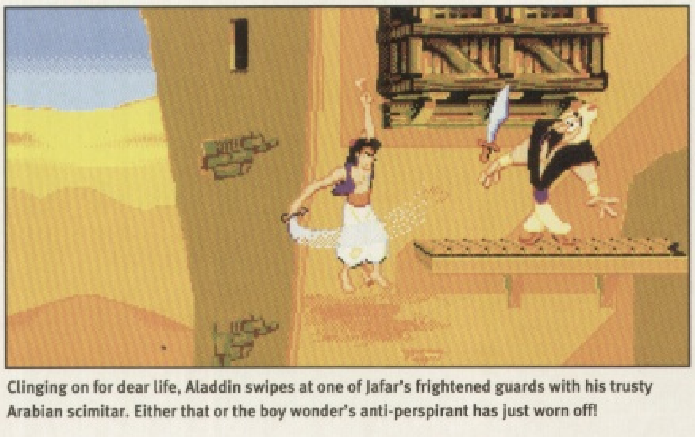
- Aladdin is *gorgeous* to look at.
- It's playable, too.
- And varied. To some extent.

...AND THE BAD

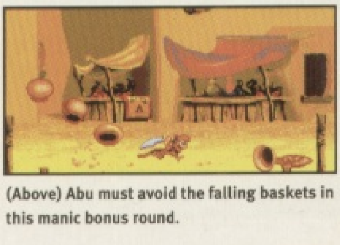
- It's a bit on the easy side.

Overall

83%

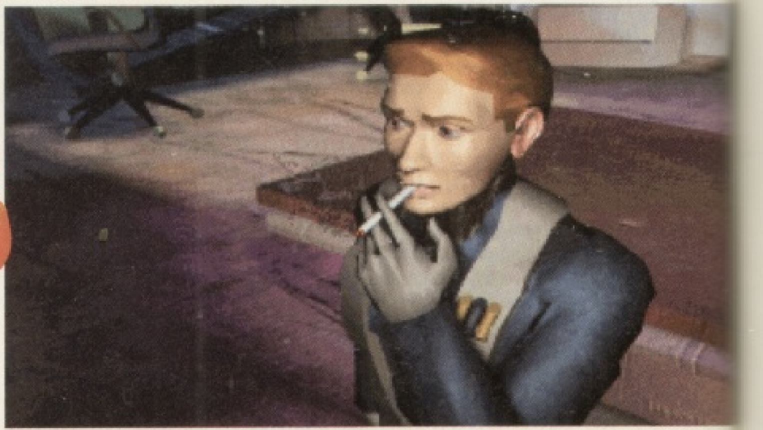


Clinging on for dear life, Aladdin swipes at one of Jafar's frightened guards with his trusty Arabian scimitar. Either that or the boy wonder's anti-perspirant has just worn off!



(Above) Abu must avoid the falling baskets in this manic bonus round.

Hell CD



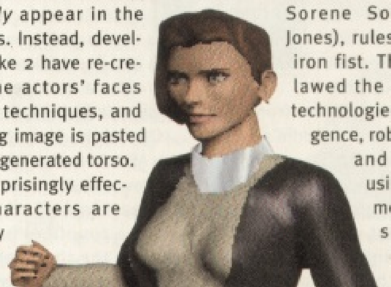
The characters featured in Hell have been created in 3D Studio and therefore have that 'stiff' quality about them. Digitised speech helps to recitify the problem of unrealistic movement.

Alex Simmons, famed slayer of demons, journeys to Hell and finds GameTek's intriging Cyberpunk thriller.

As more of the silver screen's stars make the transition from celluloid to CD-ROM, it seems the gap between movies and games is becoming smaller. Origin's Wing 3 starred John Rhys-Davis and, of course, Mark Hamill, Margot Kidder appeared in Access' Under A Killing Moon, while Tim Curry provided the voice for Sierra's Gabriel Knight and also stars in Interplay's Frankenstein.

Now our attention is turned to Hell, GameTek's Cyberpunk thriller. After starring in numerous films (in which he's usually type-cast as a psychotic murderer) and appearing alongside Keanu Reeves as the one-thumbed terrorist in the 1994 Summer smash, Speed, Hollywood bad boy Dennis Hopper now assumes the role of Satan's best mate in his computer game debut, which also stars Grace Jones, Stephanie Seymour and the former Bond villain, Geoffrey Holder, to name but a few.

Unlike so many of the other games featuring semi-famous actors, Hopper *et al* don't *actually* appear in the game themselves. Instead, development team Take 2 have re-created each of the actors' faces using rendering techniques, and then the resulting image is pasted onto a computer-generated torso. The result is surprisingly effective, as the characters are (almost) instantly recognisable and fit in well with their 3D surroundings.



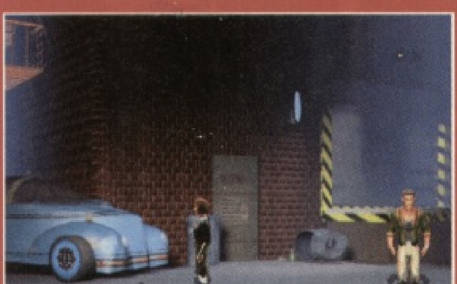
The game is set in America, a hundred years from now. Washington DC isn't just capital city of the USA any more, it's also where Hell meets Earth. Demons prowl the streets in search of victims to drag back to Hades, while the political body known as the Hand Of God, led by the androgynous Imperator, Sorene Solux (played by Jones), rules America with an iron fist. The Hand has outlawed the use of computer technologies, artificial intelligence, robotics and the like, and anyone found using such 'enhancements' is deemed a sinner and condemned to Hell.

The two characters under your supervision, Gideon Eshanti and Rachel Braue, are both field agents for ARC (Artificial Reality Containment), The Hand equivalent of the police force. However, rather than rewarding them for working efficiently to recover illegal Cyberspace equipment, The Hand has decided to show its gratitude by assassinating the duo for illegally dealing in porno images of human/demon couplings! Of course it's a set-up, but right now no-one's listening to your pleas of innocence. Well, apart from a friendly computer hacker who you've shacked up with...

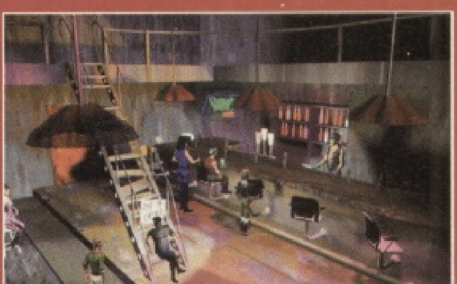
As convicts on the run, you begin the game with only a couple of leads as to who set you up. By exploring the city and completing tasks for various characters you meet, it's possible to gain further information in the form of new locations to visit and more people to interact with. If you've ever played

To Hell *And Back*

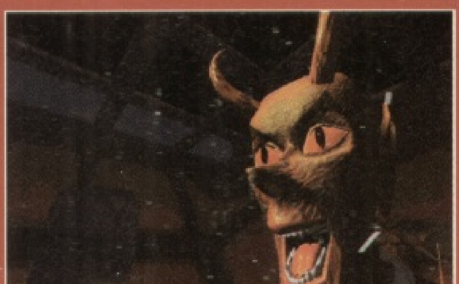
On the run from The Hand Of God, Gideon Eshanti and Rachel Braue have nowhere to turn to apart from the low-life scum who'll accept anyone into their circle of friends. People like Dave Kelsall, in other words...



The only way of getting inside the bar is by working out the password, and then conning the doorman into letting you pass. Once inside, try and strike up a conversation with the girl on the steps...



She sets you a riddle, and once solved she grants you access to the mysterious room next to the bar. However, before you can congratulate yourself on your braininess, you encounter a foul demon...



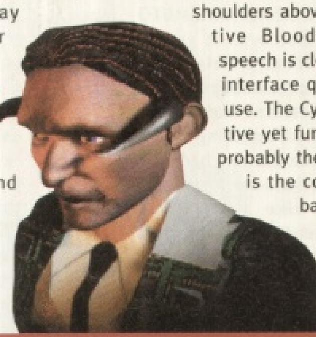
It's a bit like...

...BloodNet, which isn't all that surprising considering both games were sculpted by the capable hands of Take 2. Set in a Gothic horror/Cyberpunk future in which chip-enhanced vampires stalk their prey across the Net, it's intriguing but fairly tough. Much like Hell, in fact.

MicroProse's BloodNet (which is incidentally also from Take 2), Hell is very similar indeed, in that both games are non-linear and therefore you have almost complete freedom to visit locations in any order whatsoever. This also prevents gamers from becoming stuck on a specific puzzle, as they can simply visit another scene and tease their brain with another riddle.

The ability to do this is an absolute godsend, because Hell is actually quite tough. Unlike a lot of other adventures, Hell's puzzles cannot be solved simply by scrolling through your inventory and using every item until you find one that works. Instead, a lot of thought is needed to crack codes needed to access computers and so on, while working out how to rig together a vital piece of equipment using little more than spare parts and garbage may prove just too difficult for some rookie adventurers.

The game is completely mouse-driven, using a combination of on-screen cursors and icons to guide Gideon and Rachel through the bowels of Hell. Performing actions is a simple case of point-'n'-clicking with the mouse, while moving between locations occurs instantaneously by calling up the city map and selecting a destination.

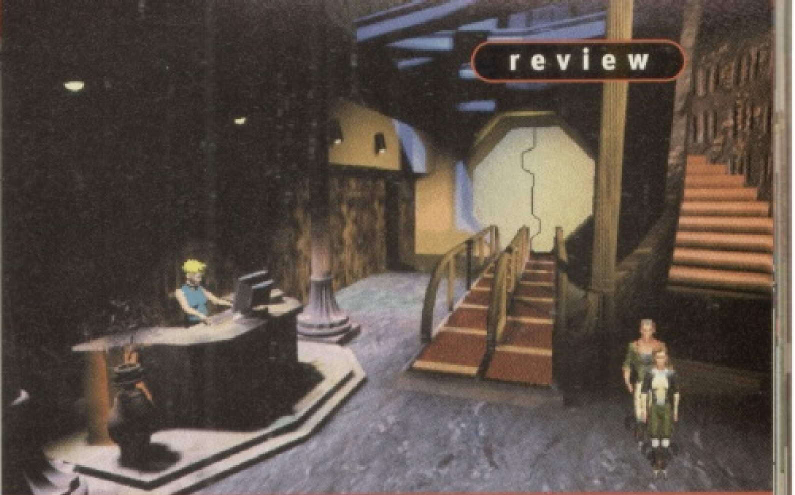


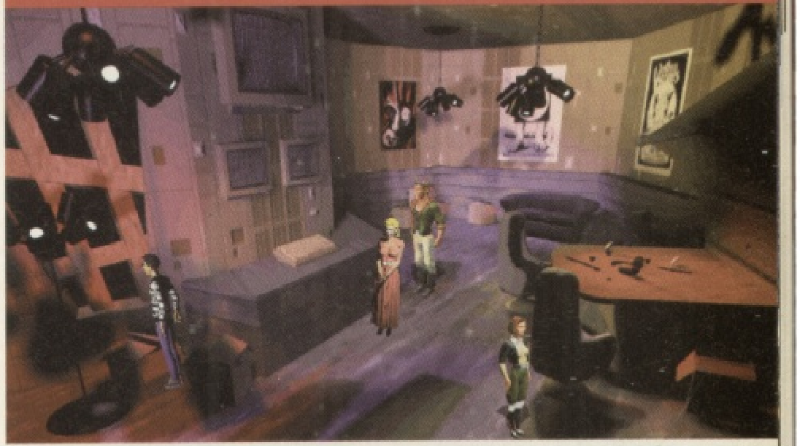
Each of the scenes is moody and atmospheric, thanks to a combination of slick Cyberpunk graphics and CD-quality sound. Each of the character's has been rendered using 3D Studio, and the resulting computer-generated humans look generally very good. But, as with most rendered figures, they tend to move unrealistically and look almost expressionless. This is rectified to some extent by the spoken dialogue, which again is very good. While the performances from Hopper, Jones and company are passable, it's the less-known actors, particularly the two lead characters, who perform outstandingly.

Communicating with other characters in the game is the most effective way of gleaning info regarding the task in hand. However, not all are friendly, especially those who lurk in Hell itself, and therefore combat often ensues. Unlike BloodNet, in which combat was turn-based, all fights in Hell are resolved automatically, and success depends on whether you've solved a problem earlier in the game or have grabbed a vital object. For example, the only way to defeat the demon Sanguinus is by grabbing every weapon found in the room adjacent to his lair. This method of combat is obviously less time-consuming than turn-based fighting, but I personally I prefer the latter because it's generally more involving. In Hell, it seems the fun of kicking the crap out of Hellspawn has been taken away.

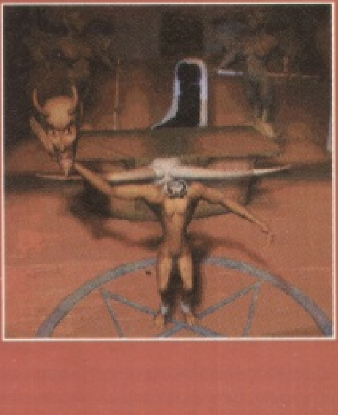
Overall though, Hell is indeed a fine game. Graphically it stands head and shoulders above the more primitive BloodNet, while the speech is clear and the player interface quick and easy to use. The Cyber-map is attractive yet functional, although probably the most useful tool is the conversation playback facility. In fact, the game's presentation is marred only by one thing — the music. It's an melody-free mishmash of beeps and blips which fails to create any atmosphere whatsoever, so you'd be forgiven for opting for the more attractive speech-only option.

As Hell is a sprawling, non-linear epic, first-time graphic adventurers could find Hell all too daunting, although the more seasoned gamehead will probably lap up the challenge. However, if you persevere through the bewildering initial stages of the game then eventually what you'll find lurking beneath is a rewarding and immensely absorbing adventure.

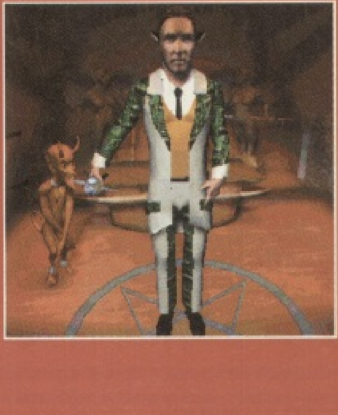




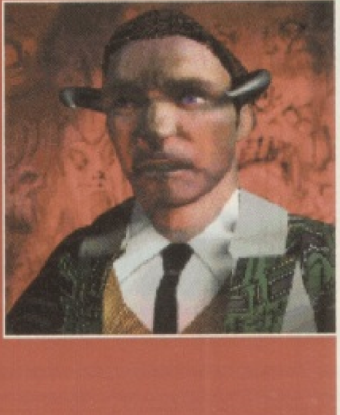
(Above) Inside the Pentagon, snooping around reveals some frightening information that the Government is selling arms to the evil demon Sanguinarius. The gits.
(Below) The Hand Of God is after Gideon and Rachel, so you can't trust *anyone*.



Beelzebub's messenger is yet another quiz master from Hell, asking you more questions before agreeing to help you by summoning Satan's best buddy, Mr Beautiful.



Materialising in the centre of the pentagram, Mr Beautiful (Dennis Hopper) is living (or is that dead?) proof that demons have appalling dress sense!



Mr Beautiful (Hell knows why he's called that) is keen to side with you, again providing you can solve his riddles. Do so, and he'll send you to Hell if you ask nicely.

HELL^{CD}

GAMETEK/TAKE 2

(0753) 553445

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 1Mb VGA, 20Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Excellent presentation means Hell is visually superb *and* simple to play.
- Provides an immense, long-term challenge.
- As usual, Dennis Hopper plays the evil guy brilliantly.

...AND THE BAD

- Perhaps too non-linear and confusing for beginners.

Overall

81%

Star Trail^CD

Alex Simmons asks the question: Is Star Trail a fantasy RPG masterpiece, or just a pile of old Orc do-do?

If you've played any RPGs in the Eye Of The Beholder/Ultima series vein before then, to be honest, Star Trail's going to hold few surprises for you. If you can't stand that kind of thing, then you'll find this about as pleasant as a toilet seat in a VD clinic. If, on the other hand, you enjoy occasionally immersing yourself in another world, and taking on the persona of a band of swarthy adventurers, then read on because this might just be your flaggo of mead.

Star Trail is the secon part of a trilogy started in Blade Of Destiny, and revolves around the world of Arkania. Arkania is full of cities with taverns, temples and marketplaces, populated by fantasy cliche elves and dwarves, and boasting more than its fair share of the usual nasties to beat up. In its favour, Star Trail is totally unashamed about its unoriginal concept, and gets on with the serio task of offering a well-cra ed game.

Initially you start off in a temple where you generate a party or, if you want to avoid the worst excesses of RPG statistics, you can put yourself on the novice level and use pregenerated characters. Once outde you'll meet your first on-player character, in a vern (of course), who'll offer you a quest to find the mystical Salamander Gem. Well, it gives you something to aim for while you potter about the city and the country at large.

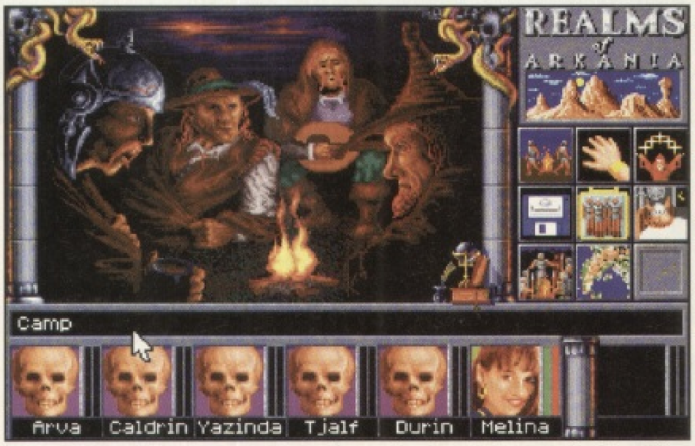
In the towns and dungeons you don't have total freedom to move around as in, say, Ultima Underworld sense. Instead, you can only walk north, south, east or west, but the creen pans smoothly etween the compass oints so you almost forget that you're really only walking in four directions. The 3D landscape around you is neatly depicted and well-shaded, with a good number of interesting locations in each area. Once in the countryside, you move via a big map on which you plan your route, then react to any encounters along the way. A fair amount of your time is spent in the wilds, and there's never a dull moment, I can tell you.

Sooner or later (pretty likely to be sooner) you'll get yourself into a fight, and that's where the real difference between Star Trail and other RPGs comes in. The first-person perspective view is replaced by an isometric-3D representation of the area around the party and the enemy, split into a grid of small squares. Each character gets a certain number of movement points and, taking it in turns, can perform actions such as spell casting, moving or attacking until they run out of points. It's very similar to something like MicroProse's UFO combat system.

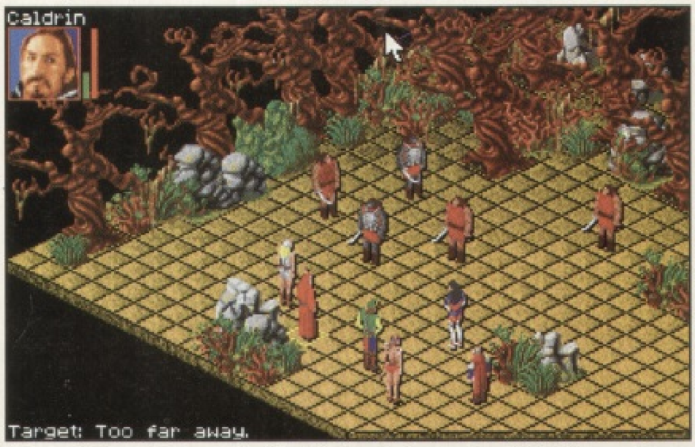
The advantage of this is that you can control the whole party, letting individuals move around the area and engage different monsters, something which the first-person method is very bad at. If you have only one character, then sure, use something like the Ultima Underworld engine. For a large group, though, this works extremely well, and is really far closer to how RPGs work when played with dice and paper.

Star Trail is certainly not for the light-hearted, since it's an involving game that will keep you going for many hours. However, RPG virgins needn't steer clear, because it's really a very simple game to get used to, with a helpful manual (blessedly short) and a novice level that can be switched to the full whistles and bells version whenever you feel ready for it.

All in all, Star Trail is a thoroughly satisfying experience. I found that the early stages, when characters are at their weakest, can be frustrating because it's so easy to have your favourite wizard killed, but other than that, I couldn't fault the difficulty of the game, which means less frustration and more raw enjoyment. A pleasant little game all-round.

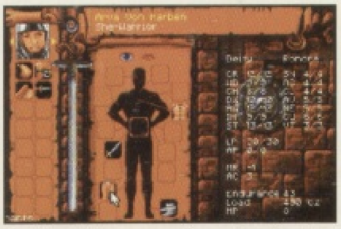


And this is the sight you *don't* want to be seeing too often after a fight — camping down with five of the six party members turned to corpses. Still, according to the main picture, the fact that they're dead isn't stopping them having a good time round the camp fire.



Target: Too far away.

Welcome to the combat screen. Best described as a fantasy version of the interface used in UFO or Sabre Team, it's one of the best ways I've met to control a whole party in any detail.



Double-clicking on any of your characters' attractive portraits brings up the traditional character/inventory sheet, which hasn't changed in style much since the days of Dungeon Master.

STAR TRAIL^CD

US GOLD/ATTIC
(0121) 606 1800
£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 31Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and General MIDI soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- It's big, with lots to do and no strangle-hold plot that you feel unavoidably chained to.
- It has lots of RPG stats and characteristics to make RPG buffs feel at home....
- ...However, you can set the computer to run the nitty-gritty stuff and just enjoy exploring.

...AND THE BAD

- Beginning characters pop their clogs a bit too easily.
- It's another cliched ride on the J.R.R. Tolkien fantasy bandwagon.

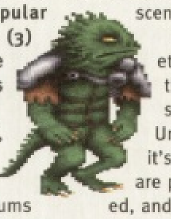
Overall

83%

Menzoberranzan CD

David Upchurch gets his tongue in a twist with SSI's new RPG.

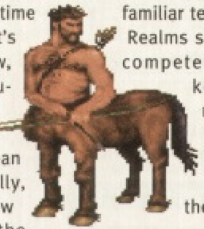
Menzoberranzan (noun, *pronounced* Men-zo-burr-an-zan). **(1) subterranean city populated by the Drow, a race of evil Dark Elves; (2) title of the latest game in SSI's popular Forgotten Realms RPG series; (3) silliest and hardest-to-say game name ever invented — and that's official, because I said so.**



Oh yes, you can just see it now, can't you? Across the country, hundreds of people wandering into their local software emporiums and saying to the shopkeeper: "Hello, I'd like a copy of Manzerobanar... Er, Monrozabor... Um, Manbozarrazan... Oh, sod it, just give me a copy of Rise Of The Robots instead will you..."

Still, I suppose that's not going to deter the die-hard RPGers, who can doubtless bandy about such tongue-twistingly nonsensical terms with frightening ease. And Menzo-wazz-it is very much a die-hard RPGers sort of game, a cliche-ridden fantasy epic that is based around the official Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rules.

The game starts off with your party of adventurers resting between quests in the sleepy little town of Icewindale. However, before you've even had time for a decent meal and a good night's kip, the town is raided by the Drow, a race of evil elves. In the confusion, members of your party are kidnapped by the Drow and taken back to the subterranean city of Menzoberranzan. Naturally, the surviving adventurers are now honour bound to venture into the underworld to rescue them...



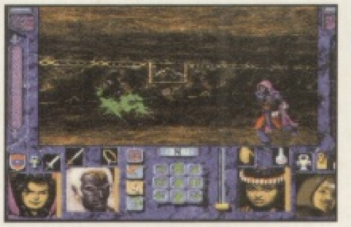
After the painfully drawn-out and tedious character generation sequence, in which you roll up the usual stats for your party members and assign them to various classes (fighter, wizards, cleric, paladin, etc), the action begins in Icewindale itself, where you have to find buckets of water to help put out the buildings set on fire by the Drow raiders. Okay, so compared to slaying dragons or rescuing fair princesses it's not the most thrilling or complex task in the world, but thing's begin to really hot up (geddit?) when you begin the search for the secret entrance to Menzo-thingy.

Menzoberranzan uses the same 3D engine as that seen in previous Forgotten Realms games, such as the recent Ravenloft. As these Doom-style engines go it's not bad, but hardly exceptional — the landscape tends to become very blocky at times, despite the special pseudo-SVGA graphic mode used, and there are annoying lags in the screen update when the game pulls new scenery data off the CD.

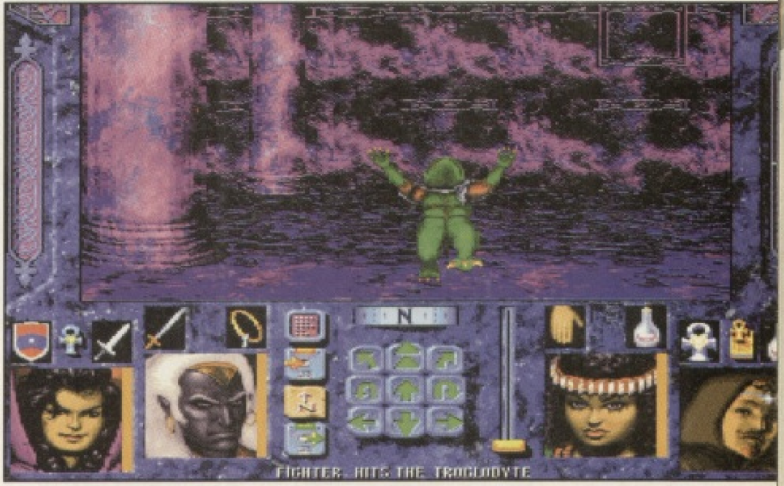
And of course, as Menzo-etc comes on CD, it's full to the brim with rendered cut-scenes and digitised speech. Unfortunately, in both areas it's pretty weak — the renders are primitive and jerkily animated, and the speech is over-the-top hammy and flowery in that awful "Forsoothe, my liege" way that so many RPGs feel they have to be.

Still, despite, this, Menzoberranzan is enjoyable enough in an an uninspiring, seen-it-all-before kind of way. The interface is very easy to use, and the storyline evolves at a interest-sustainingly rapid pace, although success tends to rely a little too much on your skill with a sword rather than the power of your brain. I'll admit that there's a little too much wandering around dreary caves and passageways for my liking, but given the subterranean scenario that's almost inevitable.

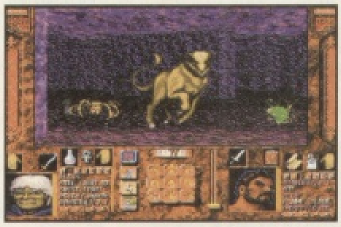
After the interesting Gothic horror setting of Ravenloft, Menzoberranzan marks a disappointing return to more familiar territory for the Forgotten Realms series. All the same, it's competently done, and those keen for yet another round of orc-bashing and goblin-nobbling should find more than enough to keep them happy here.

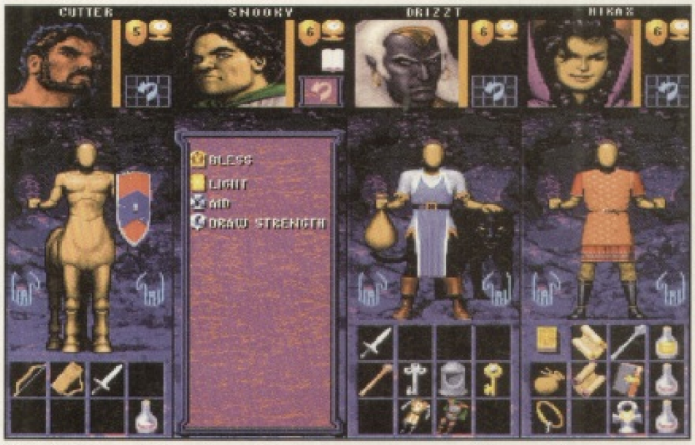


(Left) Most of Menzo-ahem takes place in the underworld, which leads to a generally dark, dreary and claustrophobic feel.



(Above) As you can see, it's not all hack-'n'-slash. Here you've met a monster who likes nothing more than a good, old-fashioned knees-up. "Come on, everybody — *Oh, do the hokey-cokey; oh, do the hokey-cokey...*"





(Above) Well, what is there to say about an inventory screen apart from, er, it's an inventory screen. For keeping track of all your bits and bobs on. You know the sort of thing.

MENZOBERRANZAN^CD

SSI/DreamForge

(0444) 246333

£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

40MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 13Mb of hard disk space and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; all major soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The 3D environment is functional, though hardly spectacular.
- The plot is simple enough for even the most inexperienced dungeoneer to follow with ease.

...AND THE BAD

- There's really nothing here that you haven't seen before.
- The rendered bits are pretty crappy.
- The speech is utterly cringe-worthy.

Overall

70%

Klik & Play CD

Dean Evans dabbles with game design with a little icon-driven help from Europress.

It's unique. A bona fide one of a kind. All these years we PC owners have been sold games that we buy, play, finish, and then shelve. Now, finally, it's our turn to show the world what *we* can come up with.

Klik & Play is game creator for non-programmers. Simply click on the objects you want to use from a library of clip art and then tell them what you want them to do. Then grab your joystick and play through your own creation. It sounds like heaven — "the world's first instant games creator" as Europress say. Uh...yeah, except that it isn't quite so instant.

You see, the fact remains that games design is a tricky business. If you think that Wing Commander 3 was cobbled together in an afternoon, just take a look at last month's 'making of Wing 3' program on the cover CD and think again. I'm not saying that you can't do a game in an afternoon, you can. It just won't be quite up to the same standards. And even then you have to know what you're doing to get results quickly.

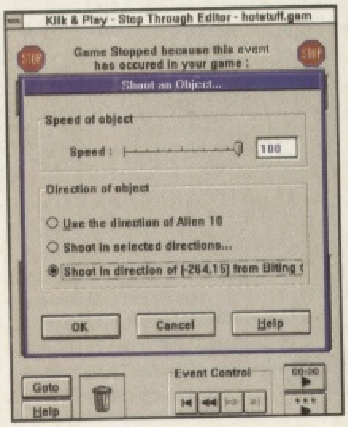
To give you an example, I threw together a little two-level Missile Command style game with the usual game over screens, scoreboards, etc, and it took me quite a few hours. But, I never sat for ages wondering what to do next, or trying to get myself out of fatal programming cock-ups — the interface is very intuitive — but it just takes a while to sort out all the movements, collisions, sound effects and explosions, even in a simple game.

With practice I think I *could* get the whole thing down to an afternoon, but (and it's a big 'but') I found that I just didn't have that much interest in writing game after game. Why? It was fun, creative, and left me feeling good and smug about having made a real working game, but to be honest the types of game you can make are pretty limited. Forget 3D bits, cutscenes and iMUSE soundtracks, because I'm talking about the basics here. As long as it's a level-based, collision-oriented game you're fine, so platform games, shoot 'em ups and Breakout clones are all on the cards. Outside of that, forget it.

In a way that's the sacrifice Europress had to make for ease of use. I can understand that. But sadly, it doesn't get away from the fact that, although it's a really clever program, and carefully thought out, it probably won't keep your attention for that long. The buzz of being a games' writer seems to wear off after one or two attempts, and the originality factor wears pretty thin too. Sooner rather than later, you'll be back to the shops for another commercial game to keep your interest up, and Klik & Play will be shelved with all the finished adventures and RPG's to gather dust.

With Klik & Play I was making games that, let's face it, wouldn't score over 50%. I wasn't disappointed with that, because for a non-programmer to make *any* game is a big achievement, and it's the warm glow when you see your very own shoot 'em up frustrate your friends that you do it for.

What makes Klik & Play fun is the whole creativity thing — coming up with something new. Unfortunately the games are always going to be variations on a theme, and personally I ran out of interest sooner than I thought. It's a neat idea, very easy to get into and if you're content to create simple arcade games that run under Windows, then it's a great, fun package. But, if you'd like to create a flight sim or Wing Commander 4, Klik & Play isn't the answer to your dreams. But then what did you expect?


Klik & Play - Step Through Editor - hotstuff.gam

Game Stopped because this event has occured in your game :

Shoot an Object...

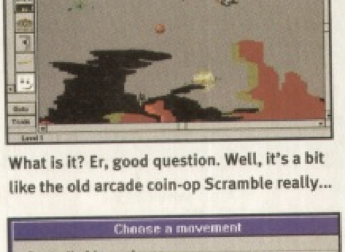
Speed of object

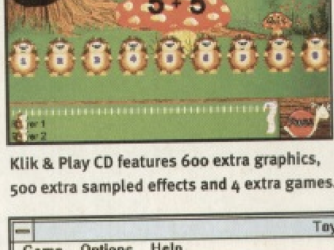
Speed : 100

Direction of object

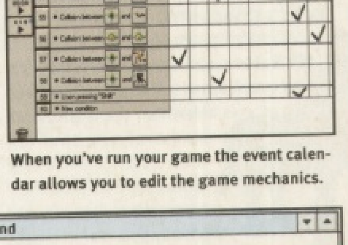
○ Use the direction of Alien 10
○ Shoot in selected directions...
● Shoot in direction of [-264,15] from Biting

When you've created some alien enemies, you've got to tell them (a) when they should be shooting, (b) who they should be shooting and (c) how they should be shooting.

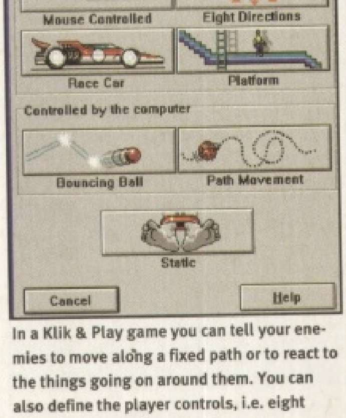

What is it? Er, good question. Well, it's a bit like the old arcade coin-op Scramble really...



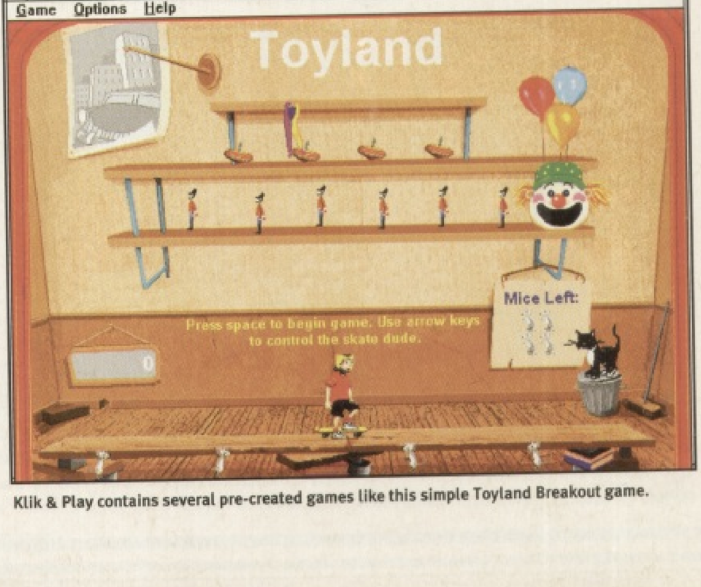
Klik & Play CD features 600 extra graphics, 500 extra sampled effects and 4 extra games.



When you've run your game the event calendar allows you to edit the game mechanics.



In a Klik & Play game you can tell your enemies to move along a fixed path or to react to the things going on around them. You can also define the player controls, i.e. eight directional movement, jumping, etc.



Press space to begin game. Use arrow keys to control the skate dude.

Klik & Play contains several pre-created games like this simple Toyland Breakout game.

KLIK & PLAY CD

EUROPRESS/IN-HOUSE

(01625) 859333

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, mouse and Windows 3.1.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Any Windows-compatible soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Easy to get into, with a great manual to help you out. Plenty of graphics and sounds to experiment with.
- There's nothing else like it around.

...AND THE BAD

- It's not particularly versatile – you can only make limited styles of game.
- Your games look like they came out of a 1980's arcade, if you're lucky.

Overall

76%

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PC REVIEW YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO PC LEISURE

FEBRUARY 1995 IN THE SHOPS ON JANUARY 15TH 1995

RESERVE YOUR COPY NOW! BUY IT AND BELIEVE IT!

Oberleutenant Dean Evans prepares to give the Allies a good kicking in SSI's latest hex-based strategy game

Panzer General CD

Back in 1938 the Third Reich sent its tanks and shock troops into Poland, sweeping aside the Polish defences which consisted of cavalry and antique artillery pieces. But six years later, it was the Nazis who were swept aside, as the Allies and Russians headed towards Berlin to end the war.

And the latter is precisely the scenario that SSI has chosen for its newest, brightest and shiniest strategy game, Panzer General. Granted, it's hardly an original setting, and there are plenty of WWII strategy games around that use it, but Panzer General has a lot to elevate it above the usual crop of brain-straining wargames. It may look like it's just another hex game, but SSI has concentrated on adding a few extra frills.

At its most basic level, Panzer General is a strategy game where you alternate turns with an opponent, moving, firing, resupplying units, etc. You can take any one of the 38 battles on offer, and you can play either the Nazis or the Allies/Russians against the computer or a friend. But best of all, it's not clogged with in-depth statistics, and strikes a balance which assures that both committed strategy players and relative newcomers will get a good game out of it.

As for the frills. SSI have updated all the graphics to ensure that the map, the counters and the control icons are all up to scratch for 1995, and this means using SVGA throughout. SSI has also added video clips from newsreel footage to add atmosphere and the sound's been revamped too, and offers far more punch than in previous SSI strategy offerings.

What works less well, however, are the animations that illustrate how the two sides fare in a combat engagement. They're very much like the battle scenes in Battle Isle 2, but nowhere near as pretty. Thankfully, you can turn them off because they just slow down the game and become annoying almost instantly. Had SSI animated the tanks and planes in 3D Studio, with texture-mapping, light sourcing and all that graphical malarky, then it would've been another matter. Unfortunately, they didn't.

Still, even with the battle animations switched off, this is the best-looking game of its kind, well up to the standard of the V For Victory series by 360 Software. As for the other additions, the scenarios are brilliantly thought out, increasing both in difficulty and complexity — i.e. you can choose a quicky 10-turn engagement or a full-blown siege depending on the time you have, and you can pick a difficulty level to challenge you no matter how good an armchair general you've become.

On top of this there's the campaign option, where you take over the Axis forces in 1938, with a few early tanks and a couple of units of raw recruits, and progress through each scenario in order. The results of one encounter affect the next, so you can get yourself into real trouble later on by losing a couple of battles. It's not enough just to win — it also matters how convincingly you thrash the enemy. Obviously, the more units you lose, the worse off you are next time around, and using a system of prestige points you quickly find that capturing strategically important cities puts you in Berlin's good books and allows you more and better reinforcements. It's the ultimate challenge.

All in all, Panzer General is a great game, with a smooth and luxurious graphical feel despite those annoying battle cutscenes. It plays as well as any game in its class, no matter how experienced a wargamer you are, and I'll certainly be coming back for more, time and again.

PANZER GENERAL^CD

MINDSCAPE/SSI

(0444) 246333

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and a mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

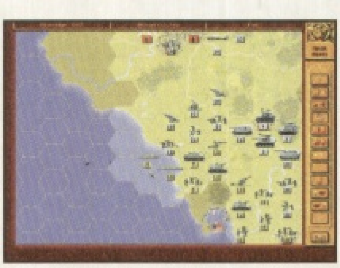
- Looks and sounds better than anything SSI has ever done before.
- The campaign option will give even hard-core strategists a strong, long-term challenge.
- It's very easy to get into, even for wargaming beginners.

...AND THE BAD

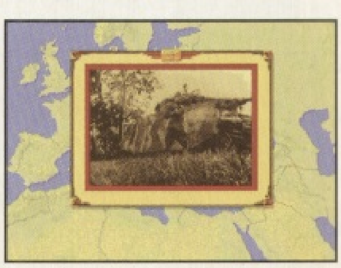
- It's all just shifting counters around hexes, just like lots of the other strategy games around on the PC.
- The battle animations are awful.

Overall

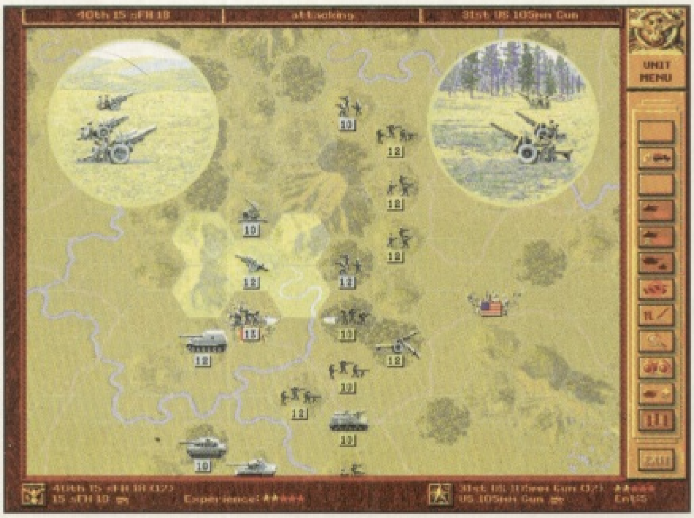
84%

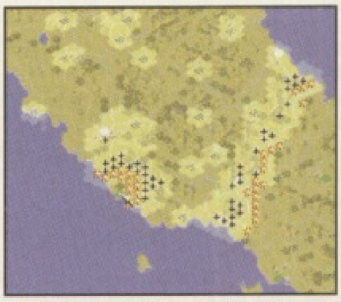


Here's how things look at Anzio itself. With so many units in such a small space, it can easily become a headache just keeping track of everything.



There are plenty of little video clips introducing new scenarios, and very pretty they are too. Thankfully, they're never too long to become boring.





(Above) Playing the Germans (defending Italy once the Italians surrendered), I've laid a defensive line across the country and penned in the enemy at Anzio. Looks good.

(Left) Things kick off at the amphibious assault in Anzio. The artillery squares off and you get to see the shells fly overhead as the computer works out who's won.

SuperSki Pro CD

Alex Simmons goes on the piste in the terrible winter sports sim from Mindscape.

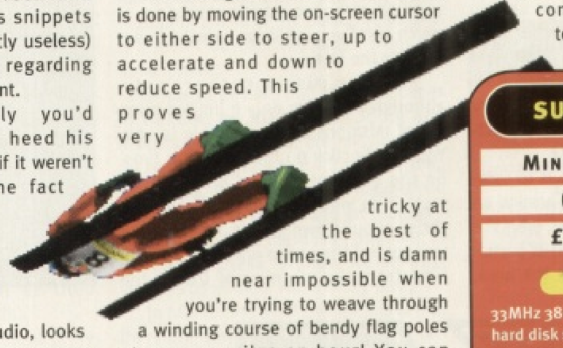
Again Microids delve deep into the software sack and pull out something, erm, a bit crap. Actually, that's a bit harsh. Make that poor. Yeah, that's better. Anyway, SuperSki Pro, shoddy as it may be, is a skiing sim which attempts to recreate the adrenalin rush of hurtling down a freezing glacier on a pair of six-foot wooden planks. Unfortunately it fails, and instead what we have here is a virtually unplayable, graphically bugged piece of substandard programming that offers little more than a few minutes of unexciting snow surfing.

'Packed' with six events, SuperSki Pro can be played by up to four players, and allows them to compete in downhill and slalom races on skis and snowboards, as well as attempt the daunting ski jump. After sitting through the awful intro, you are invited to enter the competition by double-clicking on one of the six event icons. Having selected your nationality (which makes no difference to the gameplay whatsoever), a rendered skier slides on to the screen and reveals snippets of (mostly useless) information regarding the next event.

Normally you'd probably heed his advice, if it weren't for the fact he's wearing what looks like a turban, talks like Lloyd Grossman and, like most character sprites created in 3D Studio, looks stiff and unrealistic. But, as someone once said, graphics don't make the game so, we ask ourselves, what is SuperSki like to play?

Considering there are six events to compete in, you'd expect SuperSki Pro to be quite varied, right? Wrong. There's only so much you can do with two planks of wood and a couple of bean poles, as shown all too clearly here. Bobsleigh and ski jump aside, the remaining events, namely the downhill and slalom, all look and play almost identically.

In fact, the skier sprites are about the only feature which distinguishes the events from one another, and even they're fairly similar. However, there is one saving grace in terms of SuperSki Pro's variety, namely that there are four courses to choose from in each event, so at least you don't have to ski down the white hill time after time.



Controlling the skier is difficult, and is done by moving the on-screen cursor to either side to steer, up to accelerate and down to reduce speed. This proves very tricky at the best of times, and is damn near impossible when you're trying to weave through a winding course of bendy flag poles at over 70 miles an hour! You can choose between different grades of skis before taking to the piste, but it's still bloody hard to control no matter how long the damn things are.

The bobsleigh is perhaps the most graphically impressive stage of all, but again awkward controls will result in you being flung from the car before you've even got half-way down the course. The ski jump though, is totally the opposite. Too easy by far, I guarantee you'll break the record jump in the first couple of attempts.

SuperSki Pro only becomes mildly exciting in the two- or four-player split-screen game, although you need to have *at least* a 66MHz 486DX2 to play the latter! Even so, SuperSki Pro remains frustratingly difficult to play, and the bonus bobsleigh (which only appears on the CD version of the game) fails to inject any excitement to a completely drab and tedious game.

SUPERSKI PRO CD

MINDSCAPE/MICROIDS

(0444) 246333

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 17Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

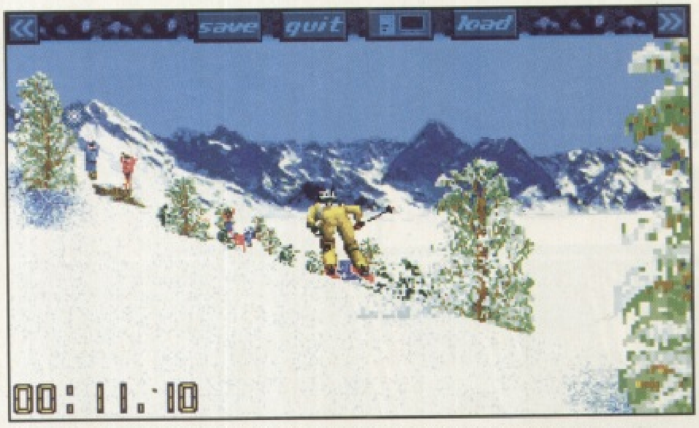
- As hard as I try, I can't think of anything good to say about SuperSki Pro.

...AND THE BAD

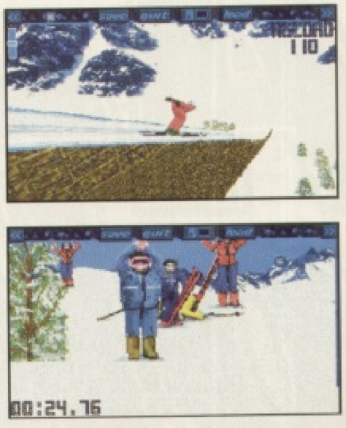
- Graphically it's glitched throughout. It's hardly inspiring is it?
- Extremely awkward controls.
- *Very, very* boring indeed.

Overall

32%



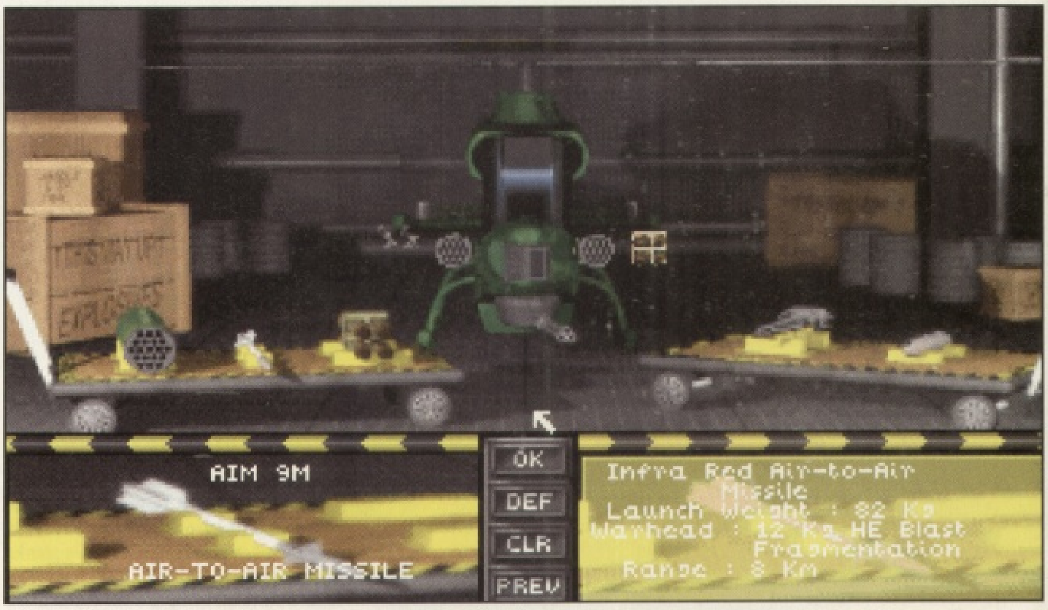
Rather than beating your opponent, during the downhill run you'll spend most of your time trying to figure out which direction the course winds!



(Top) Taking the plunge in the ski jump.
(Above) Oops! You've tumbled into the crowd.

KA-50 Hokum

Dean Evans loads up his weapons, powers up the rotors and puts the only real helicopter sim for years through its paces.



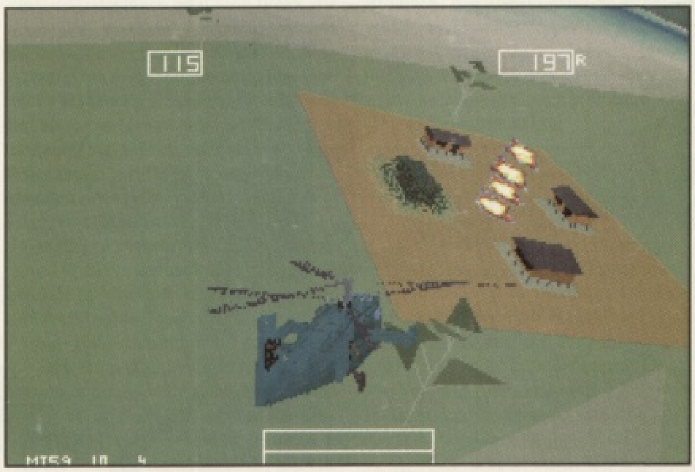
AIM 9M

AIR-TO-AIR MISSILE

Infra Red Air-to-Air Missile
Launch Weight : 82 Kg
Warhead : 12 Kg HE Blast Fragmentation
Range : 8 Km

(Above) Each helicopter has a different set of ordinance available, and when it comes to getting tooled up for the next battle, this is where you come. Care to take a Sindwinder missile or two ? Or perhaps those unguided rocket clusters? The choice is yours.

(Below) And this is what it's all about — sending your Hokum to interdict (it's a rude-sounding way of saying destroy) a village on one of the outlying islands. Watch out for flak and avoid enemy missile batteries by flying in extra low.



A little while back there was a nifty little flight sim called AV8B based on Britain's very own Harrier jump-jet. It was memorable mainly for three things — the fact that you could hover like in a helicopter, the remarkable campaign part of the game and the graphics of the SVGA version.

Well, since that game's release the same design team have been poring over a hot PC to update the game engine and do something even more special with it. The result is Hokum, a flight sim that revolves around the abilities of more hovering aircraft — or, to be precise, helicopters. That makes it the first helicopter sim to land in the PC GAMES offices for years (or at least as long as we've been here, at any rate).

It's not that alone which makes it an eyebrow-raiser, though. The gorgeously-shaded landscapes we saw in AV8B are back with a vengeance, set up this time as a group of islands rather than one big one. The campaign is done in the same style, too, and very nice it is. And the four helicopters on offer fly very smoothly indeed, and each has distinctly different characteristics.

The idea behind the game is to command a carrier ship as it sails around an archipelago of tropical islands, with the aim being to wipe out a bunch of particularly nasty pirates plaguing the area. To help you out you have some high-grade hardware on your side in the form of a group of eight assorted helicopters, which you have to use to destroy the enemy's equally high-grade hardware in a series of combat missions.

Missions are planned aboard the carrier ship on a large-scale map of the area, where you can tailor way-points, start times and the such like for each mission. All eight choppers can be flying at one time, although that leaves you without air cover should the enemy send an airborne attack your way, at which point your skills as a deck gunner come to the fore.

Planning missions is very easy, although there are only a limited number of missions types available to you. You simply click on the helicopter type, on the destination, and on what you want it do when it gets there, all via a series of pull-down menus. And because you control the entire operation in real-time from the morning of Day 1, the

Whirlibird *Heaven*

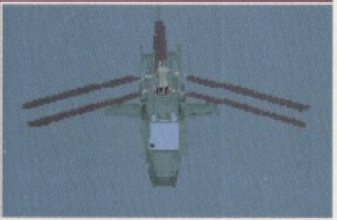
If you thought that this sim was all about flying the Hokum, then think again. There are no less than four great helicopters to fling around the skies...

The Mil Mi-8 HIP is the big boy of the group. It probably got it's name because it handles like an airborne hippo, but it has the satisfying ability of being able to carry lots of deadly ordinance. Excellent for wiping out entire villages in a trice.

The Westland Lynx is positively tiny compared to the HIP, and subsequently isn't half as fun on the weapons payload it can take on missions. It's good for reconnaisance and occasional strikes on tanks, though, thanks to its Hellfire armour-piercing missiles.

The Bell AH-1W SuperCobra. If you feel the need, the need for speed, then take this little beauty up for a spin. Both fast *and* manoeuvrable, it's the ultimate dogfighting helicopter, but still aquits itself well when a swift surgical strike is needed.

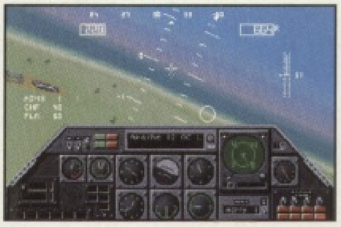
Last, but definitely not least, is the Kamov KA-50 Hokum itself, and it's as fine a piece of military harware as you could hope to find. The jack of all trades among the helicopter world, when you've got a Hokum on your side you can do anything to anything.

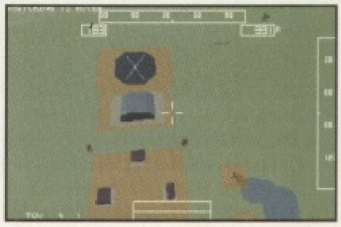


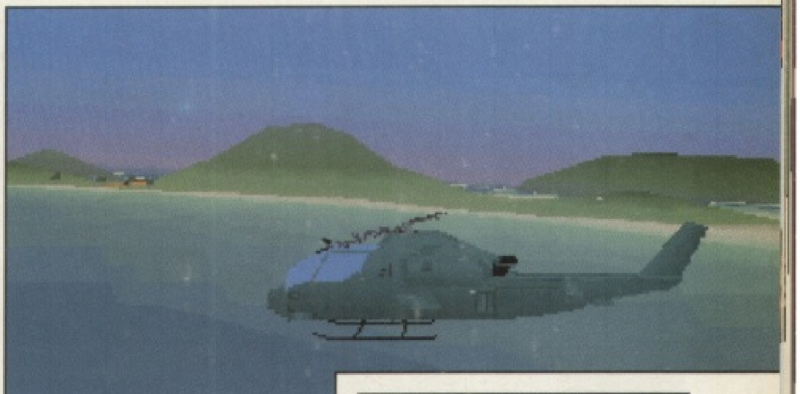
(Below) Time to rumble that enemy heli-port. Yep, they have helicopters too, and if you don't destroy these bases quickly you could find your ship under repeated attack. It's not much fun completing a mission, only to find that your landing pad has been sunk.

(Below) Of all the views, the external is one of the most useful. Rotate it around the chopper you're flying and you can see everything going on in the area. Oh, and it's a very pretty way to tour the islands too.

(Below left) Once over the target, switch to hover mode and kick seven shades of merry Hell out of the buildings. One of the advantages of helicopters is the luxury of not having to straff things, just sit there and take your time.







whole game flows smoother than a cold Foster's in the Sahara.

The other big advantage of such total control over what your forces get up to is that you can organise your missions to give you the best flying experience. You see, Hokum allows you to jump into any cockpit at any time and take over the helicopter in question. Usually you let the autopilot handle the chore of flying to within range of the target and then join in the action when things hot up.

After the mission objectives are achieved (usually symbolised by lots of burning huts in the nearby villages) you can zip out and let the autopilot fly you home. That way you avoid the boring parts of flying, and get all the juicy exciting bits. If you're clever about how you set up your mission back onboard the carrier, you should be able to keep a good rhythm going, moving from one chopper to the next just as they approach their main waypoints.

Each helicopter feels different to fly and can carry different missiles and rockets, which makes your choices very important when organising each of the missions. In the air, the whole thing feels very slick, and totally unlike a plane-based flight sim. There's something special about skimming the waves as you approach the target, island hopping like TC out of Magnum, with the ground rushing by beneath you. The sound is minimal at best, serving only to remind you that some real effects would have been nice, but if you play some thumping music in the background then it doesn't detract too much from the atmosphere.

It has to be said that the landscapes in Hokum, for all their shading and beautiful fluid curves, are missing a little something, and that little something is objects. Apart from the villages you have to blast to pieces and an occasional ugly palm tree, there isn't anything to look at on these islands. No shrubs, streams or wildlife. Not a dicky-bird.

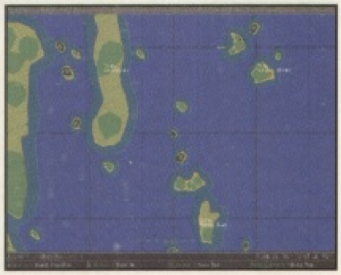
In real terms, what this means is that there are only a handful of different targets to attack, and after a while you get to the stage where you are planning the same old strike, albeit against another village which merely looks identical, and have to fly the same flight, albeit to different coordinates. It can get tedious after you've been playing the campaign for a while.

However, putting that minor gripe to one side, Hokum is a very accomplished game. As a helicopter sim it feels different to other flight sims, and is loads of fun to play. The campaign is well thought-out and gradually gets tougher as you progress, and isn't so complex that it takes over from the joys of flying.

For a good balance of most of the right flight sim features, all bundled into a relatively un-explored flying concept (that of the heli-sim), Hokum proves its mettle and then some. Worth a quick hover any day.

It's a bit like...

...Gunship 2000. In the years since it was originally released, this helicopter sim has aged particularly gracefully. The unshaded polygon landscapes look dated now, but the game itself is full of feel and depth, a fact that made it the definitive heli-sim for such a long time.



The planning map onboard your base ship is where you organise the flights you want each helicopter to make. Somewhere among those islands is the enemy HQ, and it's your job to find it.

KA-50 HOKUM

VIRGIN/SIMIS

(0181) 960 2255

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 16Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- The landscape looks lovely.
- The helicopters all fly really well.
- The campaign strategy section is just as good as the flight parts.

...AND THE BAD

- The object graphics aren't exactly the best.
- The missions get very samey after a while.

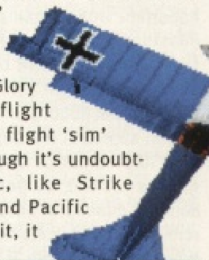
Overall

87%

Wings Of Glory CD

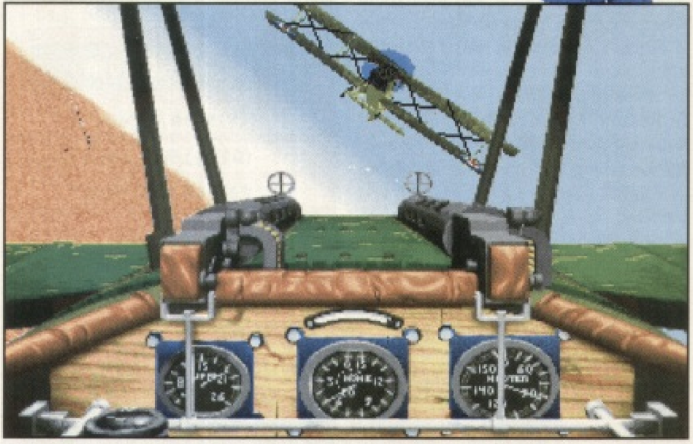
Pip-pip and tally-ho. Dean Evans shoots down the Hun in Origin's World War One flight sim.

I have to admit that I was a bit worried about Wings Of Glory. At first glance it looked like Pacific Strike with World War One planes, and it seemed to me that the programmers at Origin were just dragging out the old RealSpace game engine, changing the graphics, adding some new planes and writing a catchy new theme tune. To be honest, I feared that Wings Of Glory would end up just like Pacific Strike — blocky-looking, frustrating to play and, because it came from Origin, crap on anything less than a 66MHz 486.

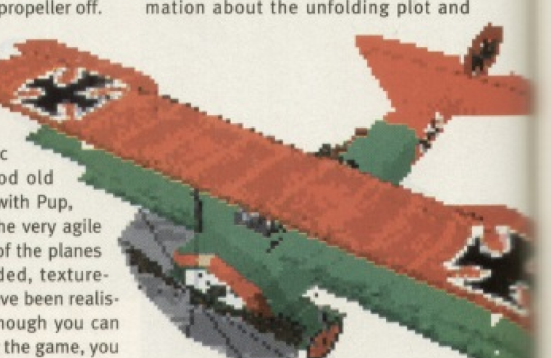


But I've been proved wrong. Wings Of Glory is a great game. It looks nice and, most importantly, it's a very playable and enjoyable flight sim. Well, perhaps 'sim' isn't the right word for it. No, Wings Of Glory is more of a flight 'game' than a flight 'sim' because, although it's undoubtedly realistic, like Strike Commander and Pacific Strike before it, it blends aerial combat, cinematic talky bits and some high-resolution cutscenes, to create an involving and absorbing adventure story.

Where Strike Commander let you fly F-16s and Pacific Strike saw you take on the Japanese Navy single-handed, Wings Of Glory takes you back to the sepia-tinted days of World War One, when men were men, war was dirty and the definition of a high-tech aircraft was one that could fly for over five minutes without shooting its own propeller off.

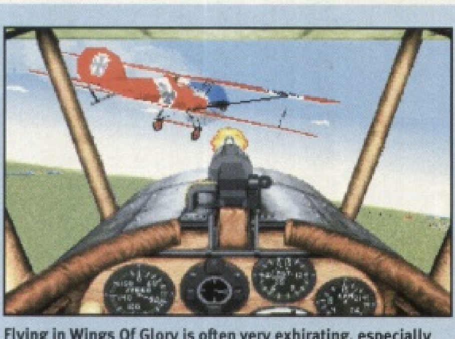


Not only can you take to the war-torn skies over France in four different Allied aircraft, you can also take the German-built Fokker Dr.1 triplane for a spin.

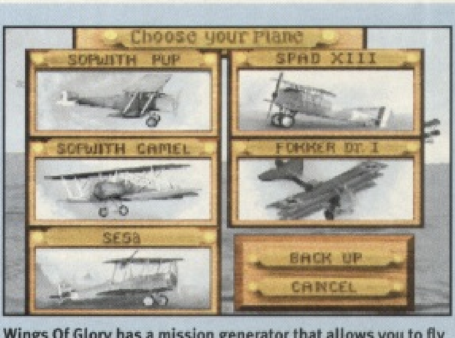


Like Origin's previous games, in Wings Of Glory you can take part in a number of linked missions, flying a variety of classic aircraft such as the good old Spad, the SE5a, the Sopwith Pup, the Sopwith Camel and the very agile Fokker Dr.1 tri-plane. All of the planes (drawn in Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped 3D, of course) have been realistically modelled and, although you can only fly five planes during the game, you can shoot down Albatross DIII's, Junkers, Halberstadt's and even attack German staff cars as they speed along French roads.

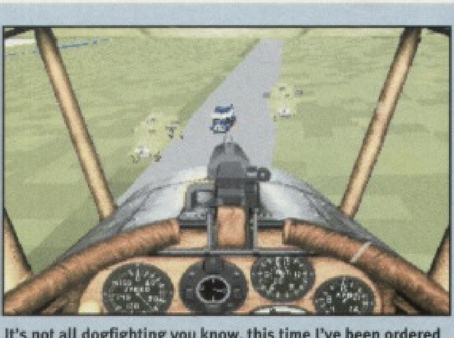
If you've played either of the previous Origin flight games, you'll be instantly familiar with the gameplay. On the ground you can chat to the various characters like the grumpy mechanic, the CO and your fellow pilots. These conversations often reveal useful information about the unfolding plot and although there's always the temptation to skip them, it's important to pay careful attention. You see, like Wing Commander, the evolving narrative is shaped by your actions, and the cam-



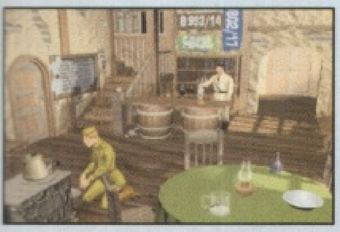
Flying in Wings Of Glory is often very exhirating, especially when the dogfighting gets as close as this.



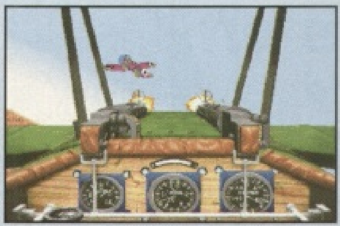
Wings Of Glory has a mission generator that allows you to fly any one of the planes above against a variety of aircraft.



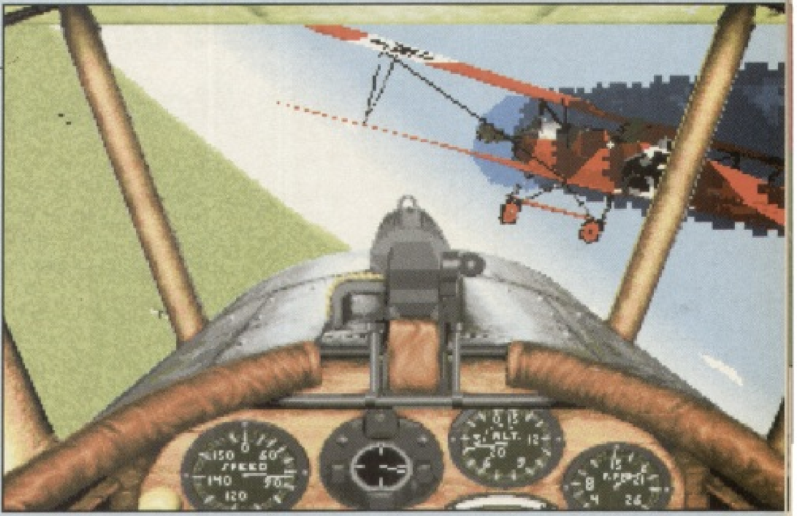
It's not all dogfighting you know, this time I've been ordered to bomb this staff car as it flees the town of Lilles.



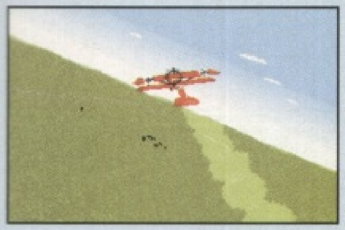
In-between the missions, you can shoot the breeze with the pilots in the rec room.



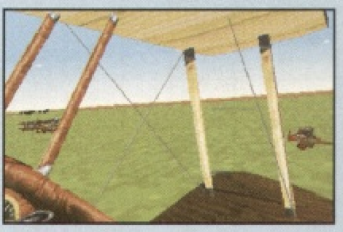
The appeal of Wings Of Glory is the slow, nose-to-tail nature of the dogfighting.



Got him! When you hit an plane in Wings Of Glory you'll be able to see pieces of the aircraft fall off. Next the plane will belch black smoke before exploding and spiralling earthwards...



If the cockpit is a bit too restricting, hit the 'C' key and turn it off. Sod realism, eh?



In a World War 1 sim, a virtual cockpit is vital as you must locate your enemies by sight.

paign is won or lost according to your skill and daring in air combat.

Once you're in the air, it's typical waypoint-based stuff. Pressing 'A' takes you straight into action, where you can engage and dogfight valiantly against the German hordes, before pressing 'A' again to return safely home for tea and biscuits. Of course, Wings Of Glory isn't just about air-to-air combat. The planes can also go into battle equipped with bombs which can be used to destroy tanks and buildings while, occasionally, the flight engineer will strap a couple of rockets onto the wings which you can use to down Zeppelins and observation balloons.

And there you have it. Wings of Glory in a nutshell, a World War 1 flight game, with bombs, rockets and an evolving plot that follows the fortunes of a small squadron based in France. I think it's a brilliant game. The graphics are a big improvement over Pacific Strike, and while they're not on a par with Dawn Patrol, the game runs quite happily on a 33MHz 486 and they're good enough to raise a few eyebrows.

"Yes, what about Dawn Patrol?" You might be saying. "You didn't like that very much did you? What makes this one better?" Well, I'm not going to hide the fact that I enjoyed Wings Of Glory infinitely more than I enjoyed playing Dawn Patrol, and it was down to one, very simple reason: the campaign. Dawn Patrol, although impeccably presented and realistic, just couldn't cut the mustard in the campaign department. In short, it was terrible. There was no sense of real continuity and, as such, no feeling that you were caught up in the middle of World War 1.

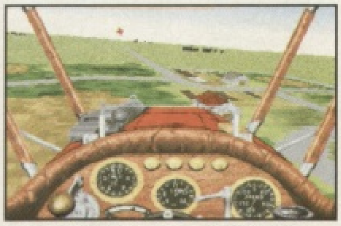
Wings Of Glory, on the other hand, grabs you by the scruff of the neck and drags you into the story whether you like it or not. Okay, the talky bits and the cutscenes may not appeal to everyone (I still cringe when I listen to the so-called English accents), but you do feel more involved and part of the game. Okay, the plot may lapse into cliche, have a traitor or two and veer off to cover events that didn't even happen in 1917, but who cares? Wings Of Glory is a fun game to play. That's the most important thing. If Pacific Strike had looked half as crisp and clean as this then it probably wouldn't have got the critical savaging that it received.

To be fair, if I have one big problem with Wings Of Glory it's that the digitised voices used in the game are absolutely awful. They are stunningly bad. God only knows where Origin got its actors from, but these are some of the worst English accents that I've heard. They're so bad, they make Dick Van Dyke's performance in Mary Poppins seem positively eloquent in comparison. I can handle the odd "Tally-ho" and the occasional "Jolly good show, old boy", but those accents... Look, if you buy it, you'll see what I mean, okay?

Apart from this one, annoying thing, I'm well and truly hooked. Wings Of Glory takes you back to the very basics of dogfighting — frantic, nose-to-tail battles, close enough so that you can see the canvas stretched tightly over the wings and your enemy's scarf flapping in the wind.

The planes fly extremely well too, if a little sluggishly at times, and the way that the wooden struts creak as you turn is an example of the attention to detail present in the game. Of course, Wings Of Glory has also got all the usual external views, a mission generator and video playback, but so have most flight sims these days, so I thought I wouldn't make a big deal of it.

If you're looking for a World War 1 sim that's both fun to fly and exciting to play, then Wings Of Glory is definitely worth a look. Once you've finished it, you probably won't play it again like Dawn Patrol, but it will definitely hold your interest for longer. Yes, although it uses history more as a guide-line than a rule, if I have to choose between them, I'd still play Wings Of Glory every single time. Toodle-pip.



Unlike Pacific Strike, the ground detail in Wings Of Glory is actually quite good.

WINGS OF GLORY^{CD}

ELECTRONIC ARTS/ORIGIN

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

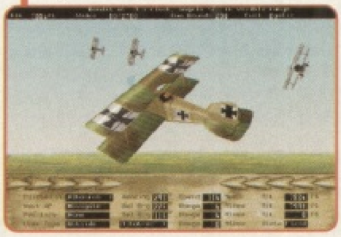
33MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

It's a bit like...

...Dawn Patrol. These two are the front-runners in the World War 1 flight sim race mainly because they're the only two who are actually in it. While Wings Of Glory tells a story, Dawn Patrol is more of an SVGA interactive book. For example, you can read about Oswald Boelcke the German Ace and then fight him in glorious SVGA. It's very educational but the campaign option is very weak.



THE GOOD...

- If you like the way Origin makes its games, then you'll go ga-ga over this one.
- It looks and plays better than Pacific Strike ever did.
- The campaign may be cheesy, but the story is a good one.

...AND THE BAD

- The English accents in the game are bloody awful.
- The talky bits look very dated compared to the FMV of WC3.

Overall

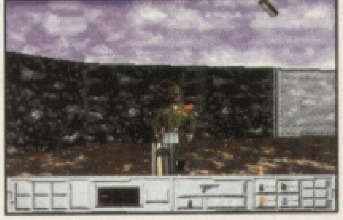
87%

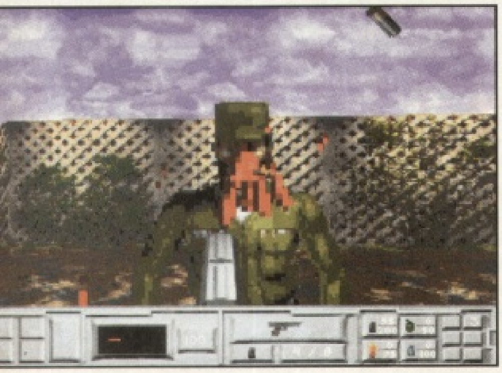
It's Alex Simmons verses The Appliance of Science in Merit Studio's newie.

The Fortress of Dr Radiaki CD

Developers Maelstrom have opted for a B-movie setting for Merit's Doom-style 3D shoot-'em-up, The Fortress Of Dr Radiaki. It works quite well in a warped kind of way, and is one of those games that is almost good because it's so bad. It made me laugh now and then, but mainly at the game itself rather than at any intentional jokes.

The plot, too, is diabolical, and goes something like this. An eccentric Japanese guy famous for his kitchen appliances threatens the world with nuclear destruction, using warheads constructed from toasters, vacuum cleaners and other household goods. It's in the mission briefing that the cheap gags first appear, most linked to Radiaki's stereotyped Oriental accent (he pronounces 'nuclear' as 'nucrear', etc). It's a pathetic attempt at humour, and from here on in it doesn't really get much better.





You're the guy who must stop Radiaki, a muscle-bound beefcake called, get this, Matt Banner. Equipped with the usual arsenal of destructive weapons, Banne must infiltrate Radiaki's fortress to disable the warheads.

This is easier said than done, as Radiaki's HQ is 15 storeys high and is guarded by giant mutated rats, sword-swinging ninjas and security droids with toasters for heads! These are simply wiped from existence using one of the seven means of attack open to Banner. His pistol proves fairly useless in combat, although it's still a damn sight better than his bare fists. The machine gun and grenade launcher will rip through the enemy in seconds, although the flame throwers proves most devastating. There's also a mystery weapon, although obviously you have to find the bloody thing before you discover what it is!

As all the levels in the game look fairly similar and are relatively basic, Dr Radiaki soon becomes unbearably repetitive. Visually it's not *that* bad but, then again, it's far from outstanding. It provided me with a few moments of fun, but, as the game costs nearly forty quid, that's not really enough to make it worth recommending.

THE FORTRESS OF DR RADIAKI CD

MERIT/MAELSTROM

(091) 385 7755

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- You'll get a few laughs out of The Fortress Of Dr Radiaki...

...AND THE BAD

- ...But most are at the expense of the game itself.

Overall

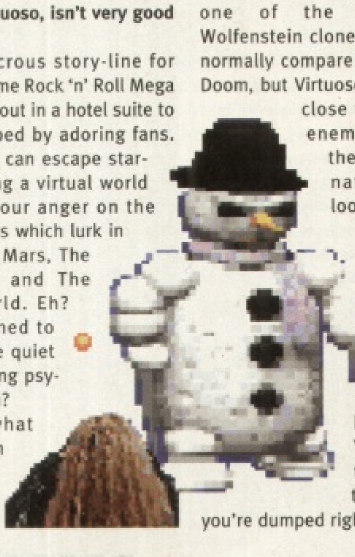
59%

Proclaimed the unluckiest man in the world, Alex Simmons gets Virtuoso for review...

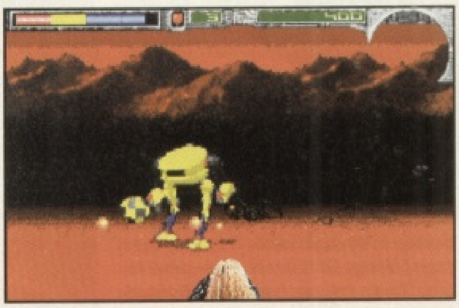
Virtuoso CD

And so the monotony begins again. Wolfenstein, having paved the way for more 3D blasters than you could care to mention, is yet again the subject of the sincerest form of flattery — imitation. Needless to say, the latest effort, namely Elite's Virtuoso, isn't very good at all.

Take the ludicrous story-line for starters. You're some Rock 'n' Roll Mega Star who is hiding out in a hotel suite to avoid being mobbed by adoring fans. The only way you can escape stardom is by entering a virtual world and taking out your anger on the Cybernetic enemies which lurk in the VR worlds of Mars, The Haunted House and The Underwater World. Eh? Whatever happened to the one about the quiet boy next door going psycho with a shotgun?

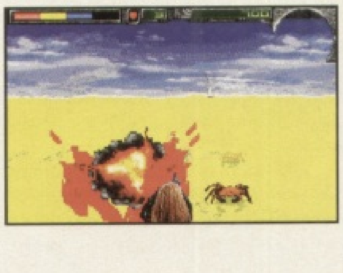


Controlling what looks like Jon Bon Jovi is a simple but often frustrating affair, as he walks awkwardly due to the game's poor 3D engine and always stands glued to the spot when firing his gun. This prevents you from blasting on the run, and therefore leaves you prone to attack whenever a target is engaged.



Playing the game is far from enthralling. Being one of the worst Wolfenstein clones I've seen (I would normally compare this sort of thing to Doom, but Virtuoso doesn't even come close to ID's classic), the enemies encountered in the game are unimaginative and generally look abysmal — a rag-tag bag of spindly-looking bats and rust-encrusted droids is about the sum total of enemies encountered.

It's also terribly annoying to play. You're equipped with three lives, and each time one is lost you're dumped right back at the start of the level, no questions asked. Battling back through the level is tedious to say the least, and in the end I reached for the power switch rather than the continue option. Virtuoso really is the most pathetic piece of software I've seen in a long time. It looks awful, the gameplay is virtually non-existent and as for the music... Let's just say it comes as no surprise that the band behind the soundtrack are as yet unsigned.



VIRTUOSO CD

ELITE/MOTIVETIME

(0922) 55852

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 3Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Not a bean. Nothing. Zip.

...AND THE BAD

- Just about everything really, unless you like staring at the back of Jon Bon Jovi's head.

Overall

27%

0628 770594

For more info see the B.B.S.

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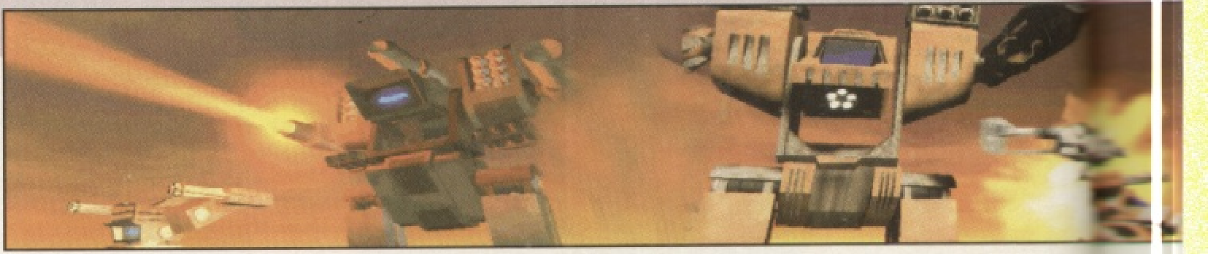
Screen shot of WORLD CIRCUIT™ by MicroProse™

Dean Evans defends the Earth in Sierra's enjoyable gigantic robot-wrecker.



EarthSiege

They had it coming. They created huge robots with revolutionary Artificial Intelligence to perform dangerous tasks with lightning precision. But they made a mistake. A fatal mistake. They should never have taught them to fight...

At first glance, EarthSiege doesn't really fire the imagination at all. You know that it's some sort of robot sim and, if you glance at the back of the box, you can see that the screenshots look pretty and that there are 45 missions, eight campaigns and full digitised speech in the CD-ROM version. And it's a good job we don't pay much attention to plots in computer games either, because with its cliched robots-take-over-the-Earth storyline, EarthSiege is in dodgy territory from the word go.

But when you load it up and start to play around with it, you soon discover that EarthSiege is actually a very nice game indeed. The animation of the robots is excellent, the sound effects are good, the missions are fun (you can customise the difficulty level) and the career option is a challenging mix of battle tactics and resource management. Okay, so underneath all the futuristic trappings, EarthSiege is little more than a flashy-looking tank game with big legs, but it's probably the best and the most enjoyable tank game with big legs that I've ever played.

EarthSiege is the first of three robot-sims due to appear this year and, like Virgin's imminent Iron Assault and Activision's forthcoming Mechwarrior game, the gameplay involves wandering around a pastel-coloured wasteland, blasting a variety of skyscraper-sized robots. Obviously, you control a mechanised robot of your own, called a HERC, and when the menu screen appears daring you to mess with it, you can choose to take on either a single mission or to start a career.

Let's say you plump for the single-mission option. First, you can select what type of mission you want to try, i.e. an easy reconnaissance patrol, a covert raid on an enemy listening post, an all-out strike against an enemy base, etc. Then you can customise the difficulty level, toggling invulnerability on/off or changing the skill of the enemy. Finally, you've got to pick the type of HERC you want to control, perhaps a lightly armoured but nippy model for reconnaissance or a big, horribly beweaponed machine for raids and strikes.

The HERCs themselves can be equipped with a variety of weaponry including machine guns, pulse cannons, lasers, particle beams and missiles, and each robot type has a certain number of 'hard points' where these weapons can be mounted. For example, the weakest and smallest HERC only has three hard points, while some of the bigger, bulkier robots may have seven or more.

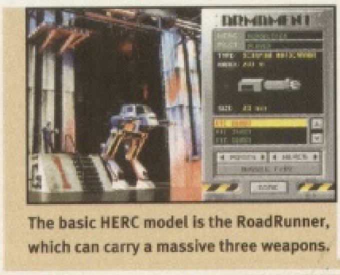
Although these hard points aren't really important in the Single Mission or Instant Action options, if you take the strategic plunge and try out the Career option, you take part in a series of linked missions but start the game with a couple of very basic robots and some bog-standard weapons. As the game progresses, and only if you're successful in your missions, you can collect salvage from the battlegrounds, and this salvage can be used to repair damaged HERCs or to construct new ones.

In the Career option it's vitally important that you use your salvage wisely. Do you invest in a new HERC model and give yourself more firepower? Do you plough your resources into building new weaponry for your existing vehicles? Exactly how much salvage should you put aside for essential repairs and maintenance? In fact, the Career option is probably the most absorbing part of EarthSiege and, while the single missions work best as a quick five minute shoot-'em-up, it's the campaigns that will ultimately hold your interest and ensure that you're still playing a month later.

But by far the most striking thing about EarthSiege is the quality of the graphics. The screenshots on these pages don't really do the game justice, because if the graphics are stunning (and they are) the animation of the robots and the attention to detail is quite superb. As you can see, all of the robots are texture-mapped and light-source shaded, and you'll just have to take my word for it when I say that the HERCs move very realistically and convincingly as they stride across the dull, flat landscapes.

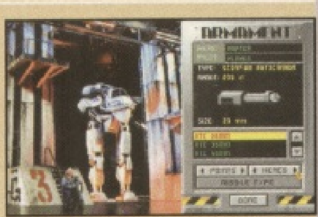
EarthSiege is an extremely atmospheric game. You can spend hours just battling your way through a campaign, knocking out listening posts, rescuing stricken HERC pilots and raiding enemy bases for salvage. With an in-depth campaign option, a variety of HERCs to pilot, wingmen to order about and those stunning graphics I mentioned in the previous paragraph, EarthSiege is a game that's almost unlike anything you've ever played before — unless, of course, you were unlucky enough to pay good money for Novalogic's Xenobots that is.

If I have one major gripe it's that I'm not sure how long EarthSiege will hold your attention. Oh yes, it looks very nice and it plays well too, but even though there are more than enough missions to keep any would-be robo-jock thoroughly absorbed, I'm just not convinced that there's enough variety to keep you interested and excited for more than a couple of months. I could be wrong, but

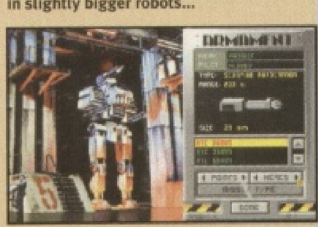


The basic HERC model is the RoadRunner, which can carry a massive three weapons.

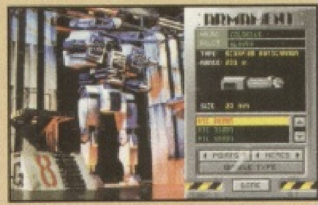
Heavy *Metal*



But as the war progresses, you can invest in slightly bigger robots...



...And then bigger robots that can carry lasers, missiles and pulse cannons...



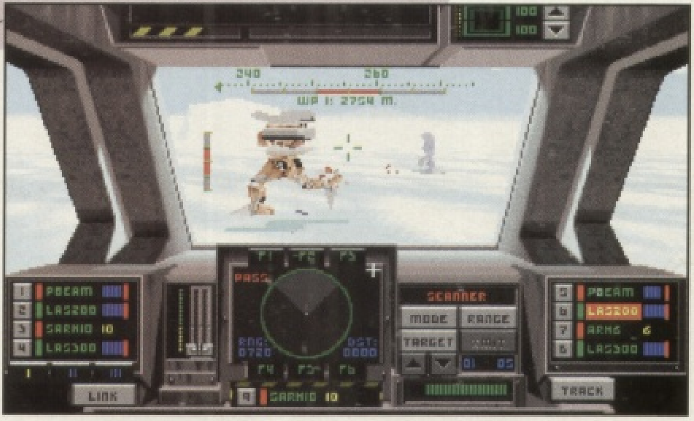
...Until you can finally build the massive Colossus, the ultimate HERC model.

I haven't gone back to it since because the action has become a bit too similar. You amble to waypoint A, you shoot the bad guys, you leg it to waypoint B, you shoot the bad guys again. You blow up the base and then the mission ends. Is there enough to it?

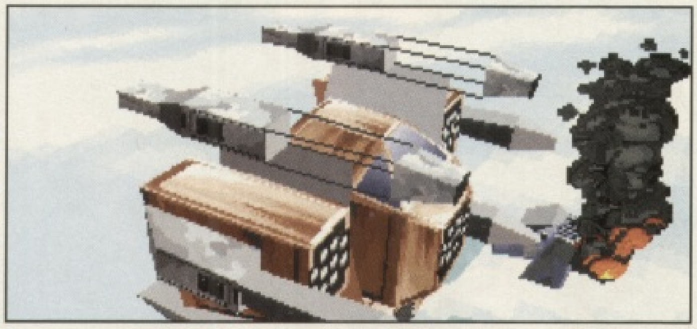
To be honest, I've absolutely no idea. If you like the idea of strutting around with a giant robot and having four racks of missiles at your disposal, two linked laser cannons, a particle beam thingy and a huge pulse cannon, then EarthSiege might well be a game to put on your shopping list. It's atmospheric, fun to play and, if you take the time to get stuck into the career option, it's completely absorbing. Between you and me, I've taken a sneaky look at both Iron Assault and Mechwarrior II, and in my opinion EarthSiege will be the pick of the bunch. I think it's the best robot simulation in town.

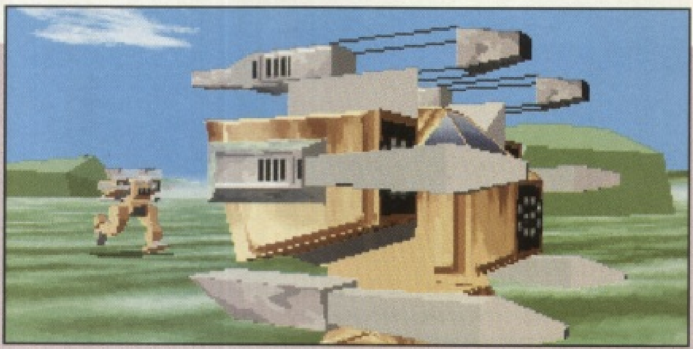
It's a bit like...

...Iron Assault. Like EarthSiege, Virgin's robot sim is all about huge robots battling against each other with futuristic and highly-explosive weaponry. In your powerful assault vehicle, you must rid the world of greedy corporations and, as you progress through the game, you gain money to buy newer and bigger weapons. Sounds like a blast, doesn't it? Check the review next month.

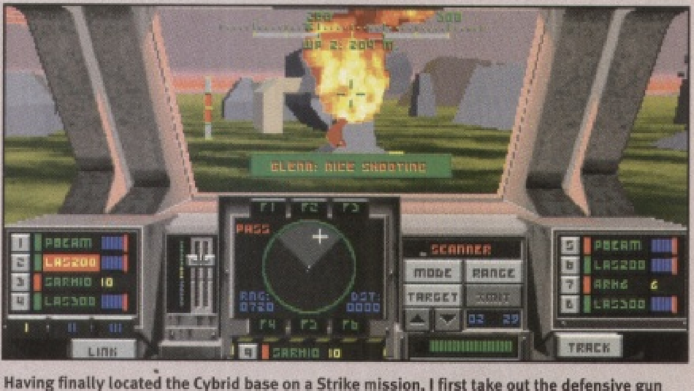


Riggs and I amble across the frozen plains of Siberia, desperately seeking the Cybrid base. Unfortunately, we can't find it so I waste some time taking potshots at him. He doesn't seem to mind, so I blow him off the planet with a well-aimed missile...





(Above) Piloting the new, improved Colossus, my wingman and I head quickly into battle. As you can see the robots in EarthSiege are texture-mapped and light-source shaded, and they all come with metallic camouflage paint, a drivers air-bag and three months free insurance.



Having finally located the Cybrid base on a Strike mission, I first take out the defensive gun emplacements and then, when the base is defenceless, I can destroy it at my leisure.

Ha! Your puny HERC is no match for my mighty Colossus. Prepare to die, Cybrid...

...Ah, reinforcements. Bring them all on. I've got missiles, lasers, a particle beam thingy...

... I've taken a bit of damage, lost a couple of weapons and the shields but I've won. Phew!

EARTHSIEGE

SIERRA/DYNAMIX

(0734) 303322

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 20Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Thrustmaster WCS, FCS and Rudder Pedals; Sound Blaster, General Midi and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Stunning graphics and animation.
- The combat is fast, frantic and very satisfying.
- The Career option is a longter, strategic challenge.

...AND THE BAD

- You might just get bored of the gameplay after a while.
- The ground detail is a little, er, sparse.

Overall

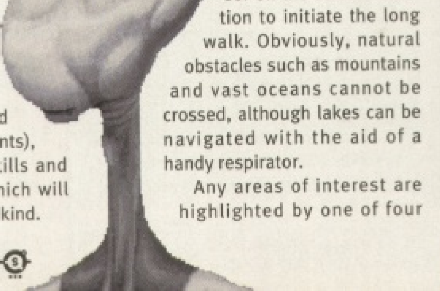
89%

Alien Logic CD

It's not everyday you get to meet talking genitalia, as Alex Simmons did in SSI's bizarre offering.

Cork may be good for tiling bathroom floors and sealing bottles, but basing a game around it is a ludicrous idea. Could it be that Alien Logic is a bottle-opening sim, in which decaying bits of wood must be fished from a vintage bottle of Beaujolais? Thankfully not. You see, in the legendary land of Jorune, Cork is a genetic substance in which bio-organic robots called Recos are bred. And you need the help of these tiny monsters to uncover a plot which threatens the safety of your friends, your home and — rather predictably — the world.

Put simply, Alien Logic is a mish-mash of platform action and role-playing, so therefore it's difficult to draw comparisons with other games. Essentially it's an arcade adventure in which the hero must explore the land of Jorune (a strange fantasy world with a sprinkling of sci-fi elements), honing his magical combat skills and collecting precious objects which will aid him in his quest to save mankind.

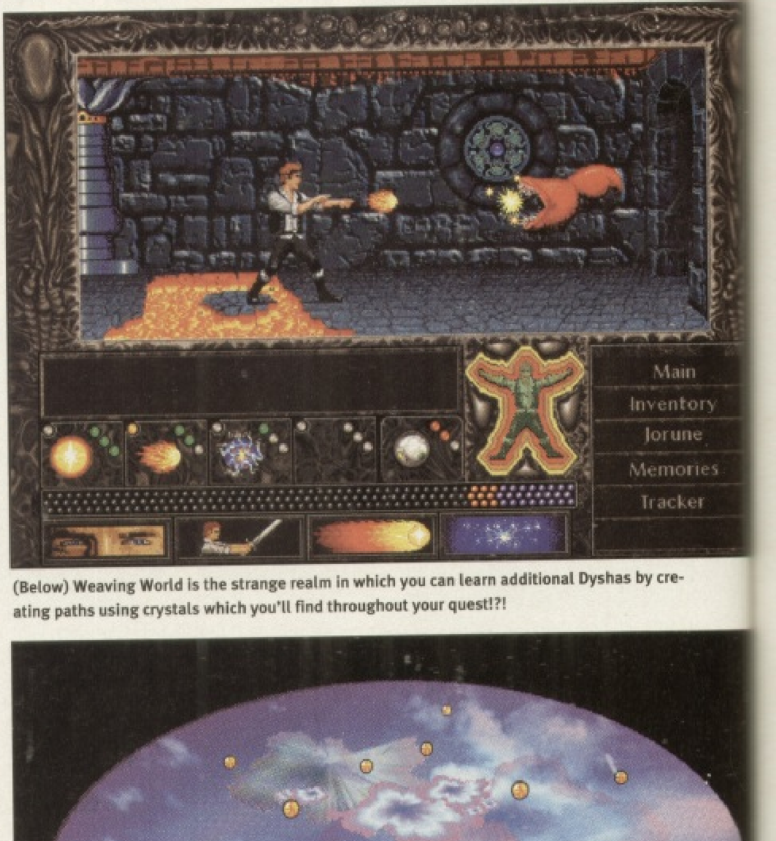


The game begins rather oddly, with our hero chatting to what is best described as genitalia with eyes. Asking questions by selecting one of the numerous dialogue lines, you'll eventually unveil the objective of your quest and end up at one of the warp-holes which link the island realms of Jorune. When entered, these magical portals instantly teleport the hero from one part of the world to another. Shorter journeys are not quite so simple, and progressing through the dense undergrowth on foot is unfortunately the only realistic option.

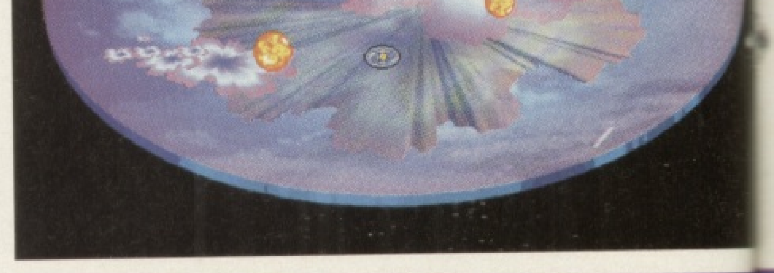
Traversing Jorune is a time-consuming but simple process — you simply switch on the portable tracker map which details your current location, and then click the cursor on the desired location to initiate the long walk. Obviously, natural obstacles such as mountains and vast oceans cannot be crossed, although lakes can be navigated with the aid of a handy respirator.

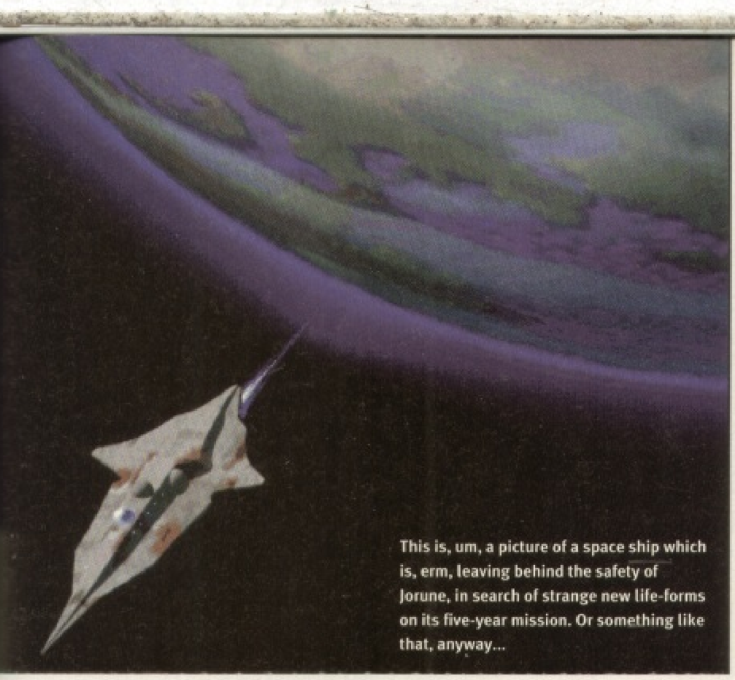
Any areas of interest are highlighted by one of four

(Below) During the game's action sequences, the enemy creatures must be attacked using magic spells, or Dyshas as they are known in Alien Logic. Unfortunately, controlling the character in these sections is incredibly tricky, and more often than not you'll die as a result of the awkward controls rather than any fault of your own.



(Below) Weaving World is the strange realm in which you can learn additional Dyshas by creating paths using crystals which you'll find throughout your quest!?!





This is, um, a picture of a space ship which is, erm, leaving behind the safety of Jorune, in search of strange new life-forms on its five-year mission. Or something like that, anyway...

So you want to play?

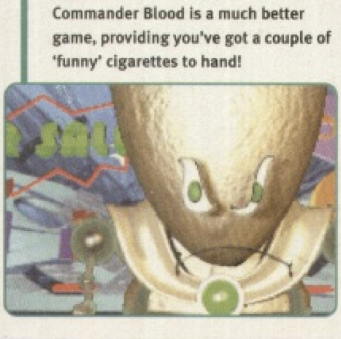
icons, each representing locations which contain either life forms, limilates (potions to you and I), cities and all-important crystal patches. There are several types of crystal — some act like keys to operate lifts and machinery, while others help you pick up spells in the Weaving World — but more on that particular weirdness later.

Naturally, Jorune is inhabited by all manner of strange creatures, the majority of which are all too eager to sink their teeth into a juicy human rump steak. A few will show you hospitality and readily talk about task in hand or indeed Jorune in general, but more often than not you'll stumble into a swarm of vicious Scraggers who must be fended off using magic, or Isho as it is known in world of Alien Logic.

(Incidentally, Isho is just another example of the multitude of ridiculous 'fantasy' terms littered throughout Alien Logic. It may all sound very mystical and other-worldly, but personally I found it incredibly annoying constantly having to fumble through the manual to find out, say, what a Dysha is. As it turned out, a Dysha is basically a spell. Well, why didn't you say so?)

It's a bit like...

...Commander Blood, I suppose. Well, both games are pretty bizarre and in each of them much of your time is spent roaming the land (or the galaxy, in the case of Commander Blood), gathering information from odd-looking aliens. But for all this weirdness, Commander Blood is a much better game, providing you've got a couple of 'funny' cigarettes to hand!



Anyway, fighting off these beasts is theoretically simple, but proves tougher in practice. The action is viewed from the side, and you're equipped with a number of spells — sorry *Dyshas* — which are divided in offensive and defensive classes. The latter spell type obviously reduces the effectiveness of the enemy's attack, while the former are used to physically injure and ultimately eliminate your opponent.

The choice of spells available is initially limited, although more can be accumulated by taking a short visit to Weaving World. This is an alternate reality which is entered by enlisting the services of a master of magic. Dyshas float around and can be grabbed by creating a path between them and the exit portal, which lies in the centre of the circular world. This is done by 'laying' crystals in a line, which the spell then follows. The spell is automatically added to your inventory providing you have enough crystals to make the connection, otherwise the Dysha is left in limbo until you next return. Odd, eh?

The cork-cutting sequences are all a bit weird, too. Let me explain. Cork is used to create Recos, which have a number of uses. Digger Recos tunnel through soft ground like soil, while Miner Recos can bury through solid rock — they're useful for recovering precious stones buried underground but are fairly expensive. Rejuvenator and Surgeon Recos cost even more, but are capable of curing superficial and even more serious wounds. Now these Recos can be bought, but it's cheaper to breed them.

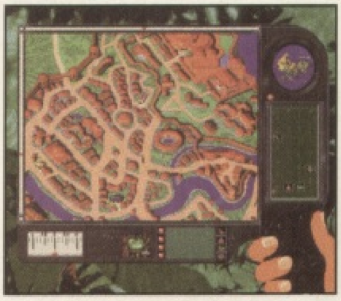
Cork comes in three colours, as do the Incupods in which the Recos grow. Different species can be created by combining the various colours, but first the raw cork must be prepared using a laser scalpel. This is done by simply cutting the cork with the blade. If successful you'll give birth to a bouncing baby Reco. Make too many incisions and the cork will crumble, rendering it useless. Pre-cut corks can be bought but, again, this costs money.

By using these Recos to excavate gems which can be sold in the city of Ardoth, you can build up enough cash and experience to explore the realm of Jorune. Unfortunately, though, this quickly proves to be a somewhat tedious experience. At first exploring the ultra-strange world is exciting, but all to soon this initial appeal wears thin. Even the bizarre bits of the game prove tiresome after a couple of attempts.

Visually, Alien Logic is pretty damn good though, being both colourful and extremely imaginative. The photo-realistic map screens are functional as well as attractive, and the point-and-click control system is simple and quick to use. But it's the pathetic action scenes (around which most of the game is based) which I found most disappointing. Graphically they're very substandard and the scrolling is diabolical, while the combat itself is repetitive and requires very little skill. Some of the creatures encountered later in the game provide more of a challenge, but this is mostly down to awkward character control than the toughness of the actual opponents themselves.

On the whole, Alien Logic is a disappointing release which is neither exciting or original. Considering it's aimed at high-spec PCs (8Mb DX2s, no less), I was expecting a game which was visually outstanding as well as supremely challenging. Unfortunately, these are two terms which can't really be applied to Alien Logic.

(Below) Using your portable scanner, a map of the local town is revealed.



(Above) There's an offer you can't refuse!
(Below) *What* on earth is that!?

Welcome Human!

ALIEN LOGIC^CD

SSI/CERIDUS

(0444) 246333

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, SVGA, 8Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Initially quite exciting, even if it is a bit weird.
- Visually, Alien Logic is colourful and imaginative.
- Excellent CD-quality sound.

...AND THE BAD

- The side-scrolling combat sequences are absolutely *abysmal*.
- Exploring Jorune is a tedious and unchallenging experience.

Overall

62%

King's Quest VII

The Princeless Bride

The never-ending story continues. More frog than prince, David Upchurch helps Sierra search for true love.

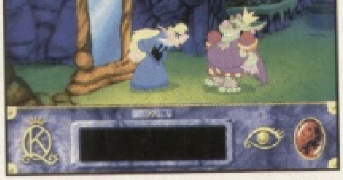
According to Sierra, the King's Quest games have become the best-selling graphic adventure series of all time. In the ten years since the first instalment was released, the seven sagas set in the Kingdom of Daventry have attracted over two and a half million fans. And that's big business in anybody's book.

This success owes a big debt to consistency. All of the King's Quest games feature what cynics might call twee, hackneyed plots in which simple-minded heroes and heroines play well-established roles on their way to an inevitable happy ending. Okay, while slightly true, this view isn't entirely fair. Even though the stories can be so sugary-sweet you can't help bringing up your lunch, the overriding qualities throughout the series have been technical excellence, manageable puzzles and an increasingly simplified control interface.

This latest episode is just as polished as its predecessors. The traditional princess-looking-for-love plot centres around Princess Rosella and her mother, Queen Valanice. Rosella wants to shack up with a strapping lad who has both brains and a sensitive streak, but Valanice wants to marry her off to the first reliable talent that comes along.

During one of their many matrimonial discussions, Rosella leaps into a pond, gets sucked into a vortex and is whisked off to la-la land. With maternal instincts in overdrive, Valanice flies after her and ends up stranded in Desert World, a kind of cartoon theme park with ancient ruins and a very melodramatic ghost.

These events set up a six-chapter story in the fantasy realm of Eldritch (see the accompanying info panel). Valanice spends Chapters One, Three and Five searching for her daughter, while Rosella tries to escape from Eldritch and find Prince Charming in Chapters Two, Four and Six. A sub-plot involving an evil enchantress who wants to destroy Eldritch also adds a bit more spice to the action.



Each chapter features an opening animation which sets the tone and plot for the challenge ahead. The graphical quality is consistently superb.

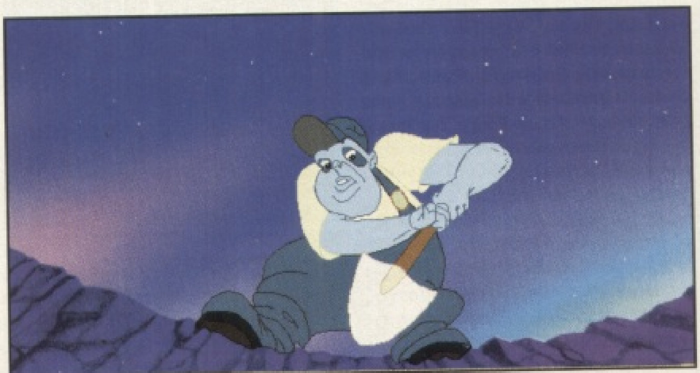
What this all adds up to is pretty typical adventure fare. A cast of characters, good and bad, help or hinder your progress. You explore each new location, collecting (and sometimes combining) objects. Puzzles are solved either by examining clues and working out a solution, or using items in your inventory. There's nothing here that hasn't been seen before.

However, what is new, particularly for the King's Quest series, is the quality of the animation. There are dozens of frames for every character, as well as decent sprite scaling, unique animations when objects are used and spot-effects for special events like deaths and solving puzzles. Every character moves as smoothly as if Disney Studios had worked on it — which isn't surprising, since Disney employees are listed among the credits. Right from its opening scenes to the two alternative endings, KQ7 achieves stunningly high graphical quality in its characters, backgrounds and numerous cut-scenes, which all combine to create the effect of an interactive cartoon.

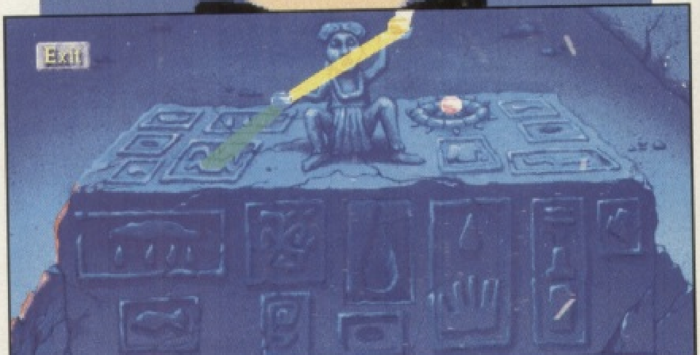
The sound is almost as impressive. The game opens with the kind of blood-curdling, middle-of-the-road song that causes grown men to cringe and suffer total goose-pimple coverage; but it rapidly gets better. The acting is excellent (speech is used throughout, with barely a printed word in sight), and there are over a hundred melodies accompanying each new scene. The only problem occurs when conversations are occasionally overpowered by the accompanying orchestra.

Fortunately, the gameplay manages to approach the standards set by the graphics and sound. Everything is controlled using a simple interface: there's you, a wand-shaped cursor, and a screen divided into a playing area and inventory box. All you have to do is scroll the cursor around the screen, and when the wand flashes, you can interact with something. When you pick up objects you can examine them in the inventory's viewing window (which sometimes reveals further items), use them in the playing area or combine two or more items to create new objects.

And that is all there is to it. There is no panel of icons, no need to click the right mouse button to scroll through a list of options, no need for any other screens. This is bad news for experienced players who will miss the com-



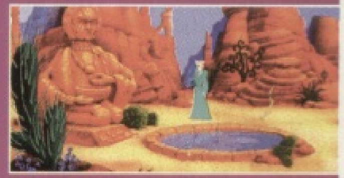
There are dozens of ways to die in KQ7, but you always get the chance to pick up where you left off, with your inventory intact.



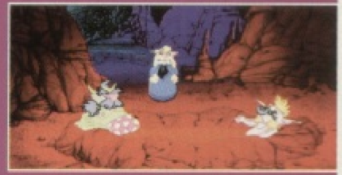
The puzzles are varied and rarely straightforward. Some have surreal answers while others rely on random selections, such as the solution to this light puzzle.

Worlds *Apart*

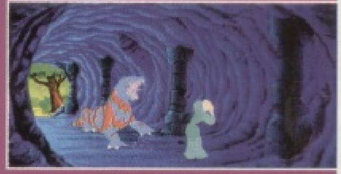
King's Quest VII is split into six distinct chapters, divided equally between Rosella and her mother. They can be played in any order, but this is the chronological sequence...



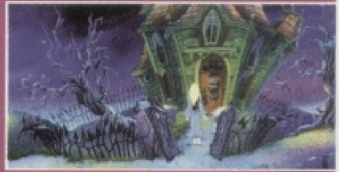
In Chapter One, Queen Valanice is stranded in a mystical and ancient desert riddled with puzzles , problems and pests. Death awaits at every turn.



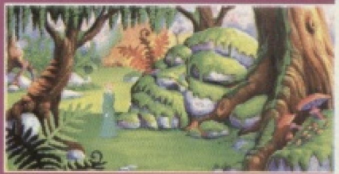
Chapter Two sees Rosella transformed into a troll and pledged to the Troll King. This is not her idea of a fairytale marriage.



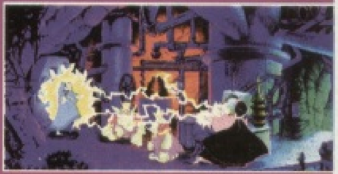
At the start of Chapter Three, Valanice is attacked by a giant, smelly salamander. Things, as they say, can only get better.



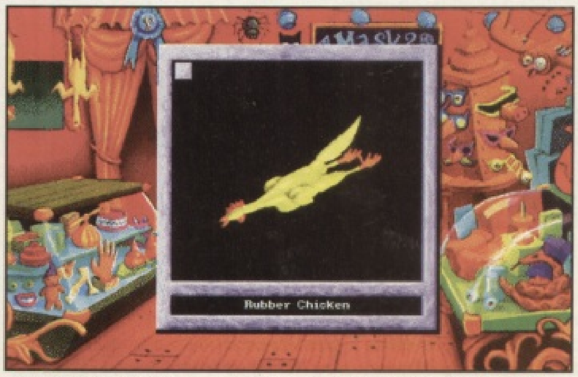
But not yet. This is Chapter Four, and after escaping half a dozen grisly deaths, Rosella finds herself outside a haunted house.



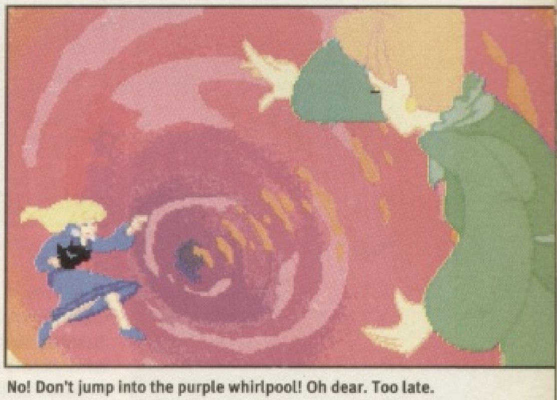
A surreal fantasy world awaits Valanice in Chapter Five. Judicious use of a rubber chicken has allowed her to progress this far.



Chapter Six isn't quite the end of the story, but it's getting close. For Rosella, it's come a little too close this time...



The rubber chicken makes a welcome return to graphic adventures — but what has it got to do with a mask, a tree branch and some green cheese?

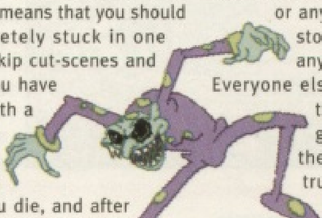


No! Don't jump into the purple whirlpool! Oh dear. Too late. Valanice watches as Rosella is sucked into la-la-land...

plexity which this system denies them, but for everyone else it's very welcome. You won't find a simpler, more intuitive interface anywhere.

The realm of Eldritch is adequately populated with a variety of characters, monsters, items and puzzles, which keep you interested from start to finish. The puzzles suit intermediate players best: novices might have trouble coping with the occasionally surreal combinations of objects, but experienced adventurers should have no trouble finishing the game quickly. Even if you do complete the game sooner than you would like, the pleasure you get from watching the cartoon story unfold is an adequate reward in itself.

Above everything else, KQ7 is a highly polished product. The presentation throughout is faultless: the saving and loading system is very easy-to-use (your position is automatically saved every time you quit), each of the six chapters can be played individually or as a sequence, which means that you should never be completely stuck in one place; you can skip cut-scenes and conversations you have already heard with a single mouse-click; your inventory remains intact even if you die, and after dying you restart in the same place; the way the interface works means that you can never 'waste' an object... and so on. Everything is designed to minimise frustration and maximise involvement.



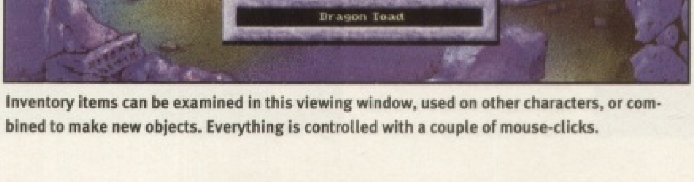
Mind you, there are a few minor gripes. For a start, the one thing that really interferes with the flow of the action is the number of times you kick the bucket. There's danger lurking at every turn — your heroines get bitten, poisoned, fried, crushed, mangled, chopped, drowned and ripped apart. For a while these miserable ends are entertaining, but ultimately it's just too annoying to get stuck in a place where you get killed over and over again.

Other problems depend on how good an adventurer you are. If you like a sophisticated interface, you'll be disappointed; if you want a stern challenge that will keep you occupied for weeks, you should look elsewhere; if you're looking for the kind of wacky, cynical humour found in a game like Sam and Max, you'll find KQ7's sentimentality a little cloying.

This last point in particular makes KQ7 most suited for families, children, or anyone who thinks they can stomach a fairy tale without any hard edges whatsoever. Everyone else should try to swallow their cynicism and give the game a chance, because the graphics and sound are truly something special indeed.

It's a bit like...

...Sam and Max Hit the Road. LucasArts' superbly animated graphic adventure is less sugary and more surreal than KQ7, but the two games share a liking for simple interfaces, extended cut-scenes and puzzles that won't seriously tax experienced players. Based on a cult American comic strip, Sam and Max follows a canine detective and his psychotic rabbit sidekick on the trail of an escaped Bigfoot. Weird but irresistible.



Inventory items can be examined in this viewing window, used on other characters, or combined to make new objects. Everything is controlled with a couple of mouse-clicks.

KING'S QUEST VII: THE PRINCELESS BRIDE

SIERRA ON-LINE

(0734) 303322

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 5Mb hard disk space, mouse, CD-ROM drive and Windows 3.1.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

All Windows-compatible sound cards.

THE GOOD...

- Stunning animation and great sound.

You can play the six chapters in any order — so you shouldn't get stuck.

- Very simple interface.

...AND THE BAD

- The storyline can be excruciatingly, horribly twee.
- It's not very challenging for experienced players.

Overall

85%

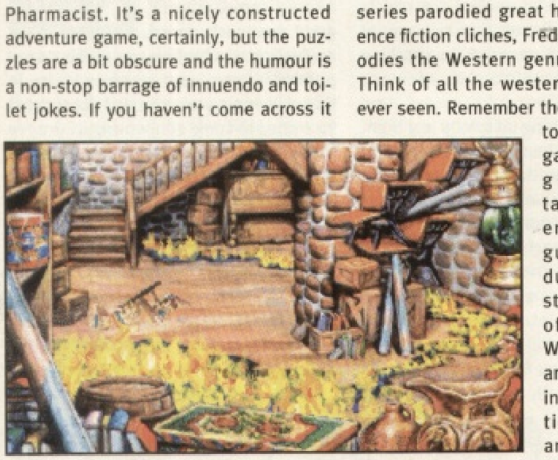
cd updates

You've played 'em on floppy now play 'em all again with all the multimedia bells, whistles, gongs and flutes that the CD has to offer.

Freddy Pharkas CD

Now I have to admit that I'm not a fan of Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist. It's a nicely constructed adventure game, certainly, but the puzzles are a bit obscure and the humour is a non-stop barrage of innuendo and toilet jokes. If you haven't come across it before, try to imagine Mel Brooks' Blazing Saddles as a computer game and you'll have some idea of what Freddy Pharkas is all about.

You see, where the Space Quest series parodied great handfuls of science fiction cliches, Freddy Pharkas parodies the Western genre equivalents. Think of all the westerns that you've ever seen. Remember the small wooden towns, the poker games at smoky green-baize tables and the end of picture gunfight in the dusty, deserted street? Well, all of these Wild West trappings are right here and in the best traditions of point-and-click adventuring, you must help Freddy overcome one silly catastrophe after another ranging from the perils of arson to the sheer terror of equine flatulence.



Sadly, the main problem with the original game was the fact that Sierra didn't bring out a CD-ROM version with digitised speech. Now, finally, this deficiency has been rectified and FPFP has all the ye-haaa's, whoops and macho cowboy chit-chat you'd expect to find in a game set on the Wild West frontier.

But like the Lesiure Suit Larry series of games, FPFP has none of the sharp wit of, say, Monkey Island, preferring the well trodden path of word play, the pun and the double entendre. Gun barrels become phallic symbols, a brothel is run by Madame Ovaree (who else?) and there is a native Indian brave called Running Gag. But, if you like this sort of thing and you're prepared to indulge in a bit of lateral thinking to solve the puzzles, then this updated version of FPFP is well worth a second look. It's not in the same league as Gabriel Knight, Day of the Tentacle or the imminent Full Throttle, but if it keeps you amused, who cares?

SIERRA/IN-HOUSE

(0734) 303322

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1, mouse and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

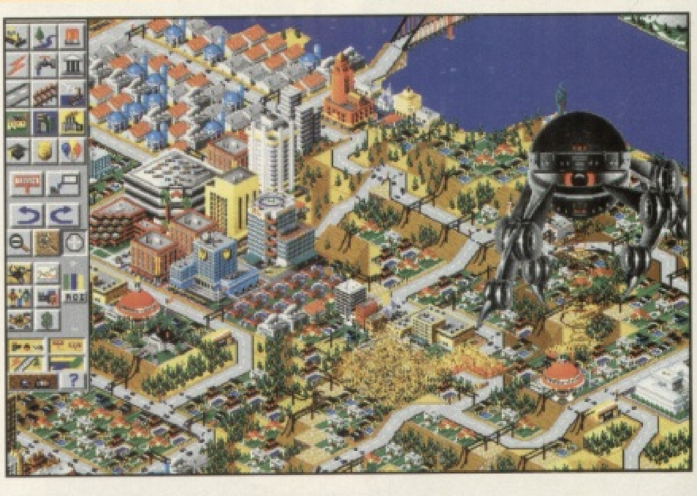
Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Microsoft Sound System, Sound Source and Roland soundcards.

Overall 79%

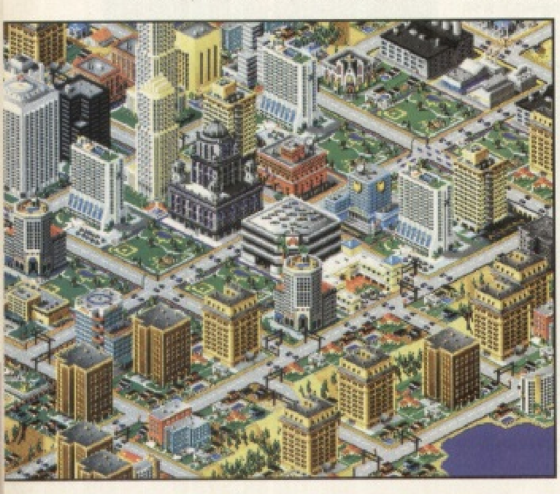
Sim City 2000 CD

This morning I approved a new solar power plant, designed a vast underground train network, read the newspaper and opened a new museum next to the river. After lunch I raised the taxes, built a zoo, a marina, a library, mucked about in the sewers and then approved the plans for a new windfarm up in the hills. But could I sit back and relax? No. First there was a fire, then the lower East side flooded and, if that wasn't bad enough, a plane crashed into the financial district. Hang on, someone says that aliens are invading...

Sim City is probably the ultimate PC strategy game and Sim City 2000, the updated SVGA version, is every bit as absorbing as the original. If you're unfamiliar with the Sim phenomenon (where the hell have you been? Mars?), Sim City is a city simulator, where the aim is to found a small community and then to expand it into a throbbing, seething metropolis that has all the benefits and disadvantages of a modern city.



You must strike a fine balance between commercial, industrial and residential sectors, lay down a complex water and sewage system, provide power to your buildings, erect huge bridges, even construct roads and railways so the people in your city can get to work. It's simple, yet totally addictive gameplay — and you probably thought that town planning wasn't going to be much fun...



The CD version of Sim City 2000 is practically identical to the floppy version, but the CD also includes the Sim City 2000: Great Disasters data disk. The disasters disk has several new preset scenarios to vex the experienced city mayor, for example, mass unemployment in Michigan, Hurricane Hugo hitting the town of Charleston and the sheer terror of the 1991 Oakland fire and a ficticious alien invasion.

If you haven't played Sim City 2000, then this CD version is a great introduction to a classic game. However, with the imminent arrival of Maxis' latest Sim City add-on, the Urban Renewal Kit (which allows you to design your own municipal buildings), it might be worth holding back until Maxis package the game, the two disaster disks and the Urban Renewal Kit onto one CD. But, if you can't wait to build and then destroy your own city, Sim City 2000 should be an essential addition to your gaming catalogue. Unless you hate strategy games, of course.

MAXIS/IN-HOUSE

(071) 490 2333

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 8Mb of hard disk space, mouse and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

Overall 85%

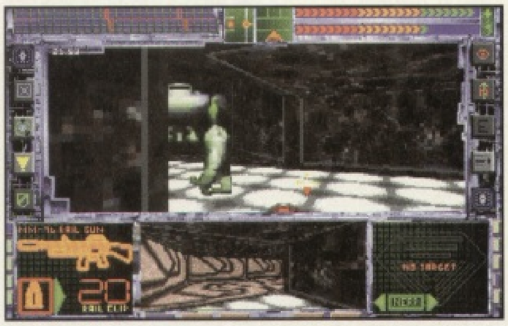
System Shock CD

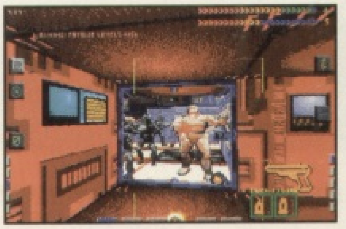
If you haven't played System Shock before, it's a futuristic, 3D Cyberpunk adventure — Ultima Underworld with laser pistols, to be precise. Programmed by Looking Glass Technologies (the people that created the Ultima Underworld saga), System Shock is set on an orbiting space station. The plot revolves around a mad computer, called Shodan, who has been performing horrific genetic experiments on the station's crew. Worse still, it's also been dabbling with a batch of deadly virus strains which it plans to unleash on the Earth.

Obviously, in the well-worn traditions of heroic adventuring, it's up to you to battle past loincloth-clad zombies and killer robots to deactivate Shodan. To achieve this, you've got to wander around the dark, moody levels of the station, solving puzzles, flicking strategic switches and piecing together a jigsaw of clues that will tell you how to defeat the maniacal computer and then how to escape. Of course, there are a variety of monsters to blast and secret rooms to find, and all of your travels are depicted using sexy, Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped 3D.

Where Doom was shoot, shoot, shoot, System Shock is a far more sedate affair. In fact, if you're looking for a comparison, System Shock is very similar to many of the first-person fantasy RPGs around at the moment, but clearly there's less character interaction, no strength, dexterity or chutzpah scores and, of course, a complete lack of taverns and buxom serving-wenches. Nope, not even one.

So what's new? Well, for starters not only does the CD feature the original 4Mb game (now with digitised voices to convey the E-Mail messages that you pick up), but Looking Glass has also included an 8Mb version of the game which features a Super VGA graphics option and built-in software support for both the CyberMaxx and the Forte VR headsets.

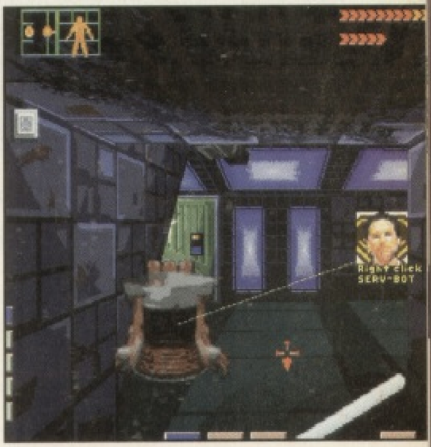




The new SVGA option is very nice. Very nice indeed. But bear this in mind — the original VGA game didn't run smoothly unless you had at least a 66MHz 486 and the SVGA version is just as unplayable unless you've got a 90MHz Pentium and about 16Mb of RAM handy. So, basically, the SVGA is an extra frill, a bonus if you've got a monster-powered machine to use it.

But the main reason you should take a look at the new System Shock CD is that it's a very good game. Initially, it seems fiddly and overwhelming, but once you get into the story and progress through the space station and through the plot, it becomes utterly absorbing and engaging.

All in all, System Shock is a game that grows on you. There's hours of gameplay crammed into the game and it's a challenge that will keep even the hardened adventurer happy. In fact, I have no hesitation in highly recommending this game to everybody...



ELECTRONIC ARTS/LOOKING GLASS

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 5Mb of hard disk space, mouse and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

Overall 93%

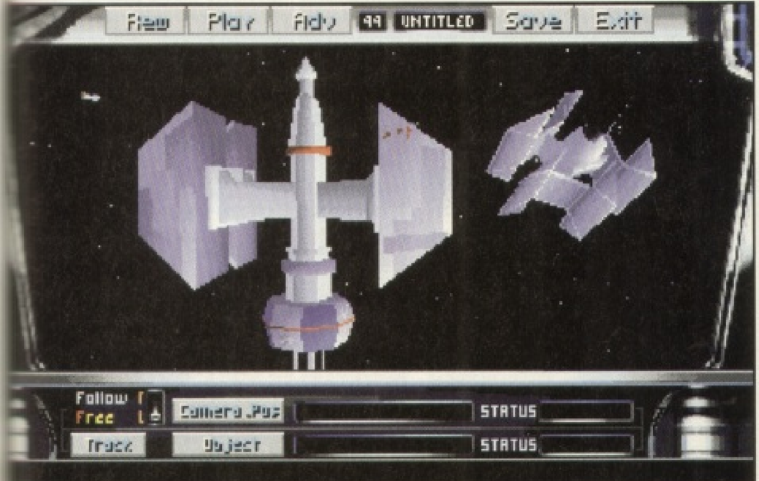
Defender of the Empire

Okay, okay, we know this isn't a CD update but hey, we haven't got a section in the mag for floppy add-ons. Besides, its an expansion disk for TIE Fighter, which we all love, right?

Obviously you need the original TIE Fighter game to play Defender of the Empire, which appears on a single disk and includes a couple of new campaigns which 'bolt' onto the game's existing seven battle scenarios. An elite pilot, titled somewhat predictably TopAce, has also been included and allows pilots to freely access any of the original TIE Fighter missions and all of the linking cutscenes.

Although it can be argued that Defender of the Empire doesn't *really* improve the original game, it would be true to say that TIE Fighter was near-perfect anyway. Skimming across vast Star Destroyers remains as impressive as ever, and engaging skilled Rebel pilots proves even more challenging and exciting than ever before.

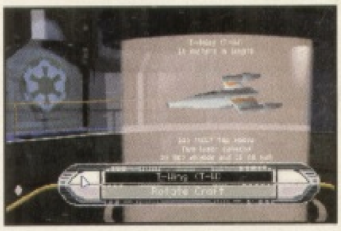
The two new campaigns featured on Defender of the Empire, namely the game's eight and ninth sagas, are obviously tougher than the first batch of missions and therefore prove difficult for those new to the TIE Fighter experience. They are missions designed for the more combat-hardened veteran, as the pilot's objectives reflect all too clearly. Each mission is accompanied by a task list as long as your arm, and failing any of the objectives will not only anger the Emperor but will also ruin your chance of promotion.



The first of the new scenarios, entitled Sabotage, is initially fairly simple, until the Rebels arrive in swarms of TIE Bombers, having stolen the ships from a supply base and then using them to attack Imperial space installations! The final ninth episode concentrates on the rather smart TIE Defender, the plans of which must be made secure against enemy forces.

In general, Defender of the Empire hands over greater responsibility your pilot, because now you almost always get to fly the Empire's most powerful fighters, i.e the TIE Defender (which made a brief appearance at the end of the first game). However, look out for the Missile Boat, which is the Empire's brand new fighter on the expansion disk, a ship that is armed and armoured more heavily than virtually anything you'll encounter (apart from, of course, Corvettes and the larger vessels).

Because Defender of the Empire doesn't actually change TIE Fighter that much, it's actually very difficult to find fault with it. It's still the most playable, absorbing space combat simulator available (yes, even better than Wing Commander 3), but there is a lack of any radically new features. The two missions will obviously keep experienced pilots happy for a week or so, but that's about your lot. Mind you, I can't think of a better game to waste a week playing.



VIRGIN/LUCASARTS

(081) 960 2255

£19.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 4Mb of hard disk space and the original TIE Fighter game.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

Overall 88%

Budget *Reviews*

If you're a bit strapped for cash and can't afford the latest price-heavy game from Anyold Softco, ***then join us as we rummage around the bargain bins and check out this month's budget releases.***

LucasArts Adventure Triple Pack

Star Wars tie-ins aside, LucasArts is most famous for its catalogue of brilliant graphic adventures. From its first adventure, Maniac Mansion, LucasArts has shaped the style not only of its own adventures but of rival companies' efforts also. Now, the three most recent games from the Lucas stable — Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis, Day Of The Tentacle and Sam & Max Hit The Road — are, for the first time, brought together in one compilation.

Not only are they the latest, but they are also perhaps the greatest examples of their genre, utilising a phenomenally basic point-'n'-click interface coupled with instantly accessible inventory screens and a mouse-controlled intelligent cursor. These games are very much 'grab-and-go' — you watch the intro, get the general gist of what you're required to do, then start clicking away to your heart's content.

Indiana Jones is the oldest of the three games, and follows the exploits of the movies' most famous archaeologist as he races the Nazis to uncover the hidden secrets of Atlantis. The game design is extremely complex and solving the puzzles requires plenty of cunning and lateral thinking, but the real lasting appeal of Indy is the game's three 'paths'.

You see, roughly a quarter of the way into the game, you get to chose whether to go down a 'Wits' path, in which the gameplay becomes more puzzle-based, a 'Fists' path, where success depends largely on your arcade skills, or a 'Team' path, in which Indy and Sophia (the mandatory romantic interest) tackle the problems and puzzles together. Thus you can play the game three times, taking a different path each time. Excellent.

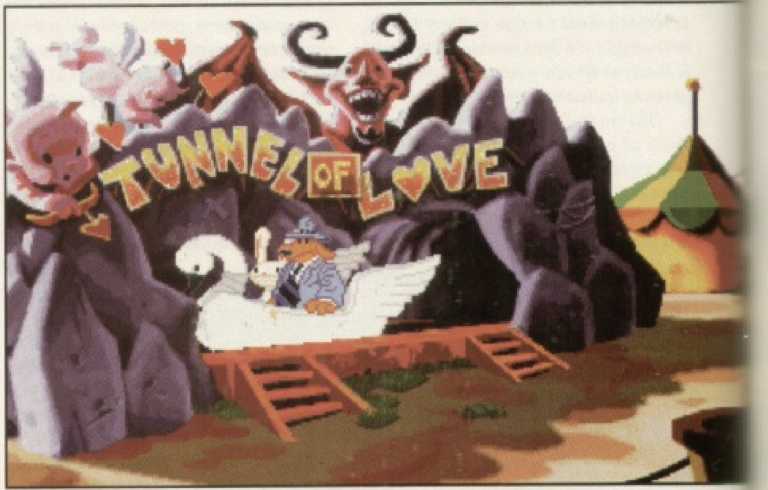
This 'three-way split' is seen again in Day Of The Tentacle (which, incidentally, is the sequel to Maniac Mansion). This time, however, you don't choose between game 'paths' — instead, you control three characters, each involved in their own little sub-plots, and can switch between them at any point during the game! Set inside the house of mad scientist Doctor Fred, the game is spread over three time zones (past, present and future), with each of the game's bizarre characters — Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie — stuck in their separate eras.

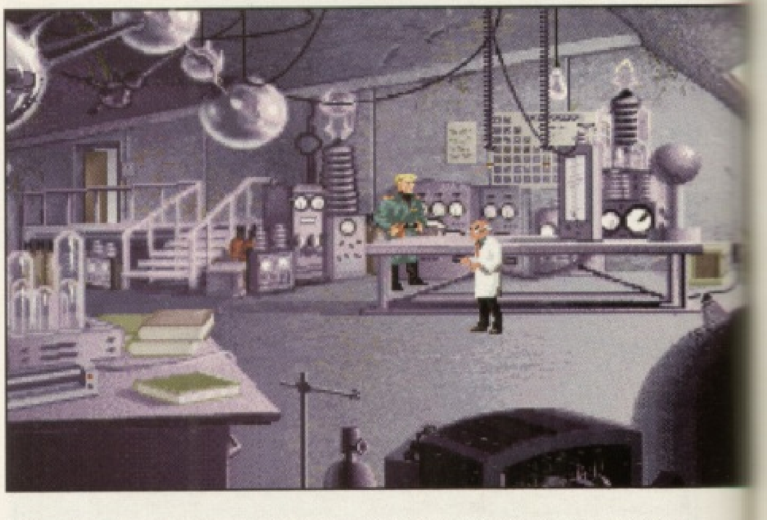
Basically, the aim is to return all three characters back to the present day and save the Earth from the deranged Purple Tentacle. This, oddly, is done by passing objects back and forth through time via specially constructed time-travelling toilets! To compliment this strange plot the graphics are highly stylised with exaggerated lines, colours and details, all giving the game a cartoon ambience.

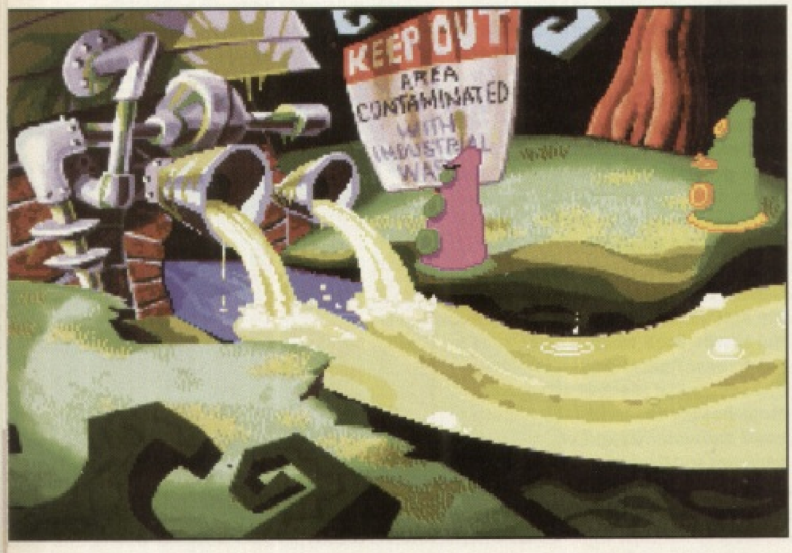
LucasArts continued this surreal styling in the last of the games featured here, Sam & Max Hit the Road. Following the escapades of pet detectives Sam (a canine Private Eye) and Max (his psychotic rabbit sidekick), this is arguably the easiest of the three games in the compilation and uses an enhanced point-'n'-click control system to even greater effect. And yup, it's a fact — Sam & Max is still one of the funniest adventures available.

This is one of the best compilation packs around. Taking into account that each of these adventures usually costs around forty quid each, the £59.99 price tag isn't really too much too ask. In all of the three games the graphics are excellent, the humour is warped, the storylines are complex, and the puzzles are devious — what more could an adventurer ask for?

Unfortunately, this compilation comes on floppy disk rather than a handy CD-ROM, and as a result you lose the quirky digitised voices which really add to the atmosphere. Still, you can't have everything and this pack is still highly recommended.







US GOLD/LUCASARTS

(021) 625 3388

£59.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 35Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and General MIDI soundcards.

Overall 90%

CD-ROM Interactive Collection Vol. 1

Boasting a whopping 16 titles crammed onto 10 CDs, the first volume of Kixx's Interactive Collection includes an extraordinary assortment of games, applications and accessories, ranging from Access Software's ancient-but-excellent golf simulation Links to Sierra's quirky screensaver, Johnny Castaway.

The compilation kicks off with three reference works. First out of the starter's gate is The Animals!, a multimedia encyclopaedia which boasts a wealth of information on some 200 exotic wild mammals, birds and reptiles. Then there's World Atlas which, as you'd expect, is a computerised map of the globe in which all sorts of info are revealed at the click of a button — yawn. Slightly more interesting is the Interactive Space Encyclopaedia which contains loads of space race facts and feats, all accompanied by spoken commentaries from the famous boggle-eyed astronomer, Patrick Moore.

As for games, there's US Gold's official soccer tie-in, World Cup USA '94. It's a dire footy sim for one, two or four players which is dogged by cumbersome gameplay which prevents players from building up exciting passes and plays. Even though this CD version includes enhanced sound and fly-by FMV of each of the stadia, these graphical niceties fail to make World Cup USA '94 even remotely interesting.

Continuing the sport theme, Winter Olympics is yet another poor quality product which fails to recreate the thrills and spills of Olympic competition. Including 10 events from downhill skiing to bobsleighing to the biathlon, it's not so much the lack of events that lets Winter Olympics down, it's the awkward control system which makes the game almost unplayable. Finally in the sports category we have the golf sim Links. It's old but it's still damn good. Enough said, really.

Heading further gamewards we encounter Thunderhawk, a nifty helicopter shoot-'em-up which, although looking considerably less impressive than Comanche, is a playable blast none-the-less. Robocod, meanwhile, is a nice little platform game which still holds its own today.

In a more cerebral vein there's Curse Of Enchantia, a bog-standard graphic adventure which isn't as visually astounding or indeed as absorbing as its LucasArts rivals, but is still a taxing quest which should appeal to fans of the genre. Finally we come to Out Run. God knows why Kixx decided to stick this old duffer in the pack, but to be brutally honest it's not even worth what little memory it takes up. Racing action at its very worst.

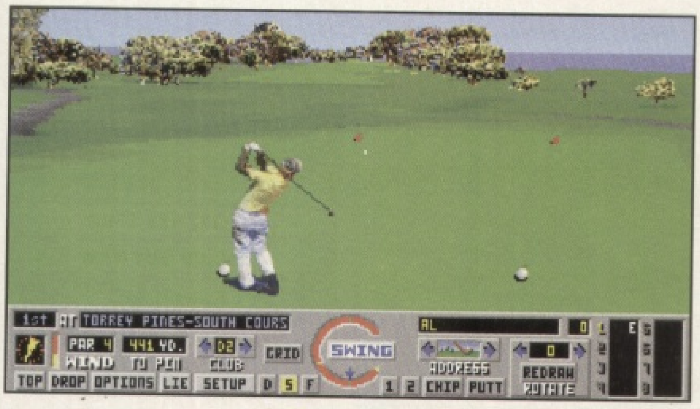
Moving onto recreation, the four titles featured include a humorous package called Comedy Central. Subtitled It's All Relative, this is a desktop utility packed with (unfunny) gags about mother-in-laws. Additionally, you can even choose a comedian to perform the gags. Hmm, fun...

The MIDI Music range, on the other hand, offers various tracks from three popular artists, namely Phil Collins, Madonna, and Michael Jackson, that you can play through your PC. Then there's the graphics utility Print & Paint Power, an all-in-one graphics studio which features the design programs Print Power Pro Plus, Paint & Power and Click Art which allows you to dabble in DeskTop Publishing as well.

Finally there's Johnny Castaway, a screensaver which, for those unfamiliar with them, prevents screen-burn and extends the life of your monitor. It's based around the antics of modern-day Robinson Crusoe, Johnny Castaway, and isn't that funny. Use the even unfunnier in-built Windows screensaver as a cheap alternative.

In addition to the 16 programs there are also over 60 demos squeezed into the pack, containing either rolling or playable snippets from existing LucasArts, Sierra and US Gold titles.

This compilation has a wide variety of titles and is worth considering if you're looking for something to introduce you to the PC. The bad titles, however, heavily outweigh the good, and this is something you can't ignore no matter how cheap the pack is.



KIXX/VARIOUS

(021) 625 3388

£49.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; SVGA; MIDI Interface; all major soundcards.

Overall 68%

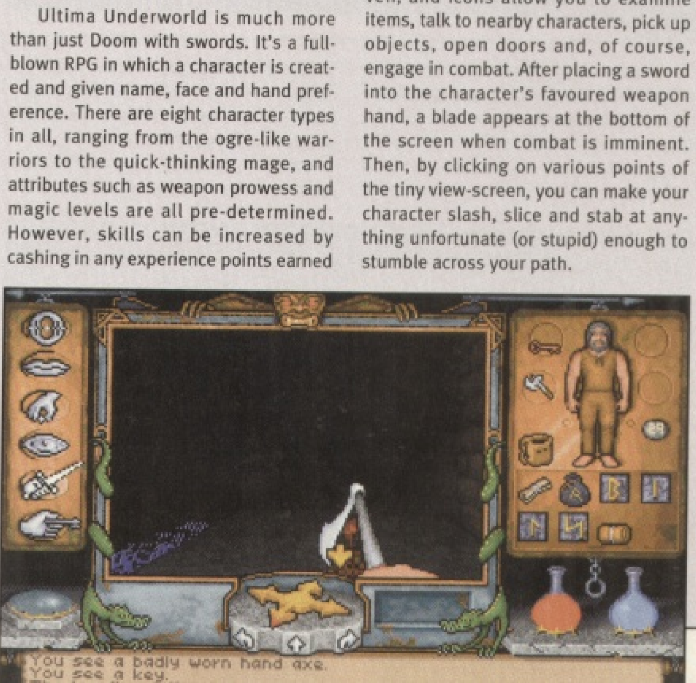
Ultima Underworld

Heard of the Ultima games? Yeah, of course you have, and you probably know that they're darn good RPGs. Well, Ultima Underworld is also a decent role-player, but tackles the genre is a different way entirely. Reminiscent of Dungeon Master, DM's archaic flick-screen scrolling has been superseded by smooth, gliding caves inhabited by terrors of the dark. Sword in hand, you must dispense instant justice by hacking through the hordes of demons as you explore the Stygian Abyss in search of the Baron's lovely daughter, Arial.

Cast into the dungeon for crimes you supposedly didn't commit (hmm, sounds like A-Team to me), the rescue of Arial will ensure your innocence upon your return. Unfortunately, this proves fairly difficult and, as the game progresses, the plot unfolds and introduces an evil mage geezer who has the girl in his clutches. All-powerful and immune to most forms of attack, it appears that a set of magic talismans must first be found before the final blow is dealt.

Ultima Underworld is much more than just Doom with swords. It's a full-blown RPG in which a character is created and given name, face and hand preference. There are eight character types in all, ranging from the ogre-like warriors to the quick-thinking mage, and attributes such as weapon prowess and magic levels are all pre-determined. However, skills can be increased by cashing in any experience points earned during combat or spell casting.

The game is completely mouse driven, and icons allow you to examine items, talk to nearby characters, pick up objects, open doors and, of course, engage in combat. After placing a sword into the character's favoured weapon hand, a blade appears at the bottom of the screen when combat is imminent. Then, by clicking on various points of the tiny view-screen, you can make your character slash, slice and stab at anything unfortunate (or stupid) enough to stumble across your path.



You see a badly worn hand axe.
You see a key.

A game of vast proportions, Ultima Underworld will take days, weeks, if not months to complete. Considering it's almost four years old, it's standing the test time surprisingly well. The main action screen is tiny and may look pitiful in comparison to the likes of Doom, but Underworld is much more of a thinking man's game and mixes combat with elements of strategy, rather than relying on mindless violence. A good game, especially for the price.

THE HIT SQUAD/ORIGIN

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

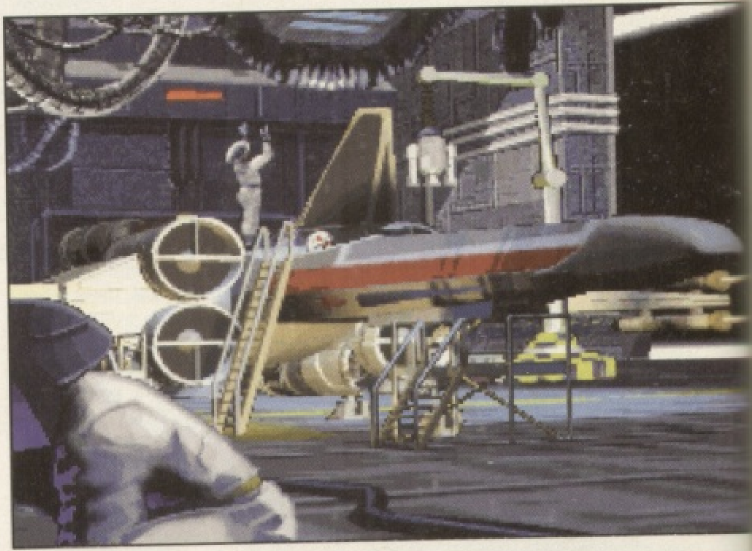
33MHz 386, 2Mb RAM, VGA and 11Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 80%

LucasArts X-Wing Triple PackCD



Arguably one of the finest games of all time, X-Wing is a space combat simulator set in the Star Wars universe. Like the films, it follows the fortunes of the Rebel Alliance as it battles against the might of the evil galactic Empire. Now, thanks to X-Wing, fans of the film trilogy — and indeed flight sim fanatics — can dogfight with TIE fighters, spearhead attacks against gargantuan Imperial Star Destroyers and even relive the assault on the Death Star from the original movie's climax.

As compilations go, this is an absolute stunner. As well as the superlative X-Wing, which remains the playable classic it always has been, the bundle also includes the two data disks, Imperial Pursuit and B-Wing. The player starts off in the shoes of a rookie Rebel pilot during combat training. These initial missions introduce the pilot to the various aspects of flying an X-Wing and its counterparts, the slow but powerful Y-Wing and the weak but agile A-Wing.

After successfully negotiating target practice and the training course, the player can then tackle one of the game's many campaigns, each of which consist of a series of combat missions. Mission objectives are varied, ranging from simple seek-and-destroy sorties to escort missions in which Rebel transports must be protected from the invading waves of TIE fighters.

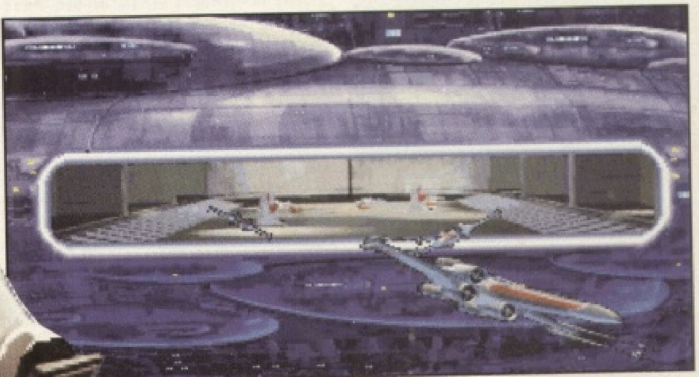
Although your X-Wing's R2 unit will handle the hyperspace jumps and damage control, the ship itself must be piloted manually, a task which initially proves difficult due the ships complex array of controls – it's not just a case of setting the engines to full throttle and steering with the joystick!

The deflector shields must be constantly angled to give the best protection against incoming laser blasts, while the ship's power levels must be configured to give the best performance. It's all daunting stuff at first, but it soon becomes second-nature and elevates X-Wing from a simple shoot-'em-up to a full-blown simulation. And a damn good one at that.

The Imperial Pursuit mission disk contains additional campaigns, and introduces new enemy ships such as the Assault Gunship. B-Wing, on the other hand, offers the player the opportunity to fly the Rebellion's newest fighter, the, um, B-Wing. Again, assorted extra missions extend the already soaring longevity of the brilliant original game.

Considering X-Wing is over two years old, it's still one of the finest games around, overshadowed perhaps only by its successor TIE Fighter. However, when bundled with the two data disks this represents supremely good value and makes an excellent game even better.

However, I have one criticism against this otherwise faultless pack. Recently Virgin released an enhanced CD-ROM version of X-Wing, which includes both data packs as well as featuring some 30 new missions. The game has been visually souped up too, and now benefits from the Gouraud shading of its successor, TIE Fighter. It's therefore better, but not by much.



US GOLD/LUCASARTS

(021) 625 3388

£49.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 23Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and General MIDI soundcards.

Overall 87%

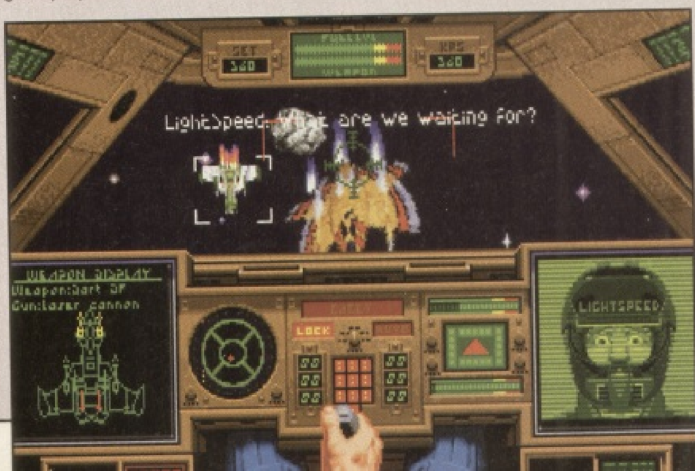
Wing Commander Academy

Wing Commander Academy is fundamentally a Wing Commander construction kit that allows you to construct vast space conflicts in which the cat-like Kilrathi fight it out against the square-jawed Federation. Various facilities allow you to create your own missions with up to four separate waypoints, as well as which ships to fly, how many Kilrathi you fight and whether there are asteroid fields and mines to negotiate.

WCA also includes a Gauntlet mode, a 15-level shoot-'em-up that throws you up against wave upon wave of enemy fighters, collecting shield top-ups and weapon replacements after each stage.

Apart from that, there's little else which makes WCA any different from the previous Wing Commander games. Okay, you get to tinker with the game engine but it's all very limited. The gameplay remains unchanged and, to be honest, the graphics which made the original so impressive now look very dated in the wake of Wing Armada and the SVGA gorgeousness of Wing 3.

Wing Commander Academy could have been so much better. There's no real structure to the missions and no proof of an overall objective to achieve. It wasn't very good the first time around and even at this new budget price WCA is still a pretty poor release, and one which is best avoided.



THE HIT SQUAD/ORIGIN

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, 2Mb RAM, VGA and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 58%

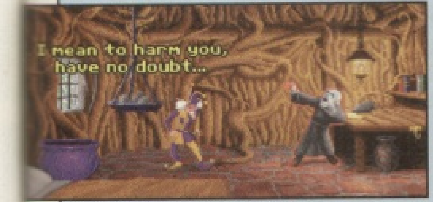
The Legend Of Kyrandia

The evil jester Malcolm, who recently starred in Kyrandia 3: Malcolm's Revenge, first reared his ugly head in The Legend Of Kyrandia which, in a timely move by The Hit Squad, has just been given the budget treatment.

There is one word which sums up the essence of the Kyrandia games — nice. OKay, they're not as cuddly, cutsey and as fluffy as the Sierra games, but like the King's Quest series, you control a politically right-on adventurer (in this case a guy called Brandon) who's out to right the wrongs caused by the dastardly Malc. This involves rescuing your old man from Malcolm's dastardly magic spells and restoring Kyrandia to its former beauty.

Using a simple point-'n'-click control system, exploring the land of Kyrandia is a simple yet time-consuming task as the game itself is huge. Obviously foiling Malc is the ultimate aim of the game, but this can only be achieved by completing a series of smaller puzzles which prove, for the average gamer, quite tough. They are, however, fairly logical (unlike those in the later games) which means most can be solved with a little thought rather than by trial and error.

Visually The Legend of Kyrandia is bright, colourful and, well, pretty. It's not up to the standard of the latest King's Quest games (especially the new Disney-esque Kings Quest VII), but then again it's some two years old. It's cheap too, costing a mere £15 and while some of you may find it a little too tricky, hardened adventurers will undoubtedly rise to the entertaining challenge Kyrandia has to offer.



THE HIT SQUAD/VIRGIN

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

16MHz 386, VGA and 7Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 75%

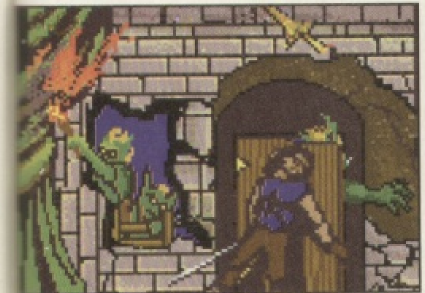
Siege

Forces of darkness have besieged the mighty castles of the Children Of Light, which lie deep in the fantasy realm of Gurtax. There are four such fortresses, each of which poses a varying degree of challenge. The player can choose either to attack or to defend the castle, the former option obviously being the more enjoyable one as you get to tinker with all sorts of hyper-destructive war machines. Deciding to defend is the tougher option, and gets even harder as the game progresses and the number of invading enemy increases.

Although Siege is a strategy game through and through, you could be forgiven for thinking that it's an arcade game because of its generally attractive presentation. However, this most definitely *not* the case. Instead, Siege plays more like a game of chess — you must carefully plan your assault, picking away at the enemy bit by bit rather than opting for an all-out attack.

The armies are comprised of numerous troops types including warriors, engineers and archers, as well as the rarer sorcerers who can cast an assortment of startlingly powerful spells. Obviously the aim of the game is to defeat the enemy and take command of their castle, and while winning is hard, playing the game is made fairly easy thanks to the game's relatively user-friendly control system.

Siege isn't faultless, though. The gameplay is often slow and the manual isn't particularly comprehensive, especially regarding the game's scenario editor. However, Siege is sufficiently complex to amuse any strategist for months on end.



ACTION SIXTEEN/MINDCRAFT

(0276) 684959

£9.99 OUT NOW

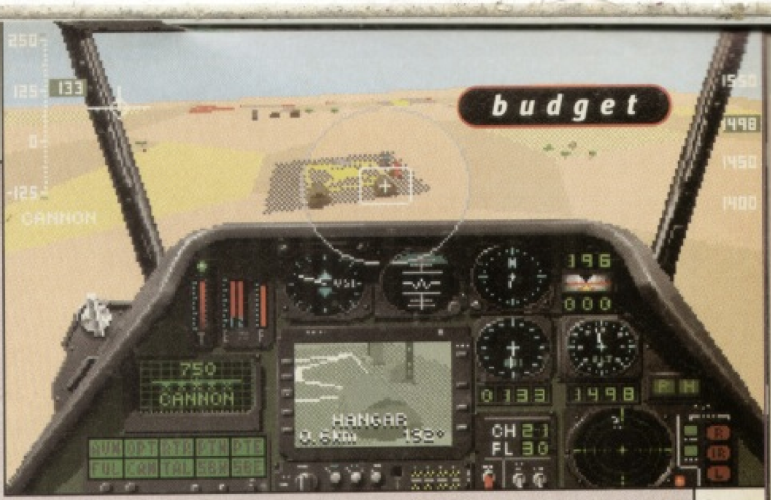
MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 1.4Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 74%



Combat Classics 3

For its third Combat Classics compilation, Empire have bundled together three ageing but highly-acclaimed games, namely Gunship 2000, Campaign and Historyline 1914-1918.

Starting with the past first, Historyline is a wargame set during the First World War. The game allows you to control either the German or French forces as you tackle some 24 campaigns spanning the whole course of the war. Each of the scenarios represents two months of real-time and allows for the gradual introduction of various unit types such as tanks, armoured cars and aircraft.

Written by Blue Byte, it's no surprise that Historyline shares many gameplay similarities with Battle Isle 2. The screen is split down the middle, with the opposing forces assuming control of each side and issuing orders to their units simultaneously. This makes the game flow much more smoothly and speeds up the gameplay considerably.

Campaign is another fine wargame, and one which combines the tactical elements of warfare with the ability to squeeze into a tank and fight the war first-hand. Simplicity ensures the game can be picked up and played almost instantly, and the potentially complex task of controlling entire battalions proves quick and simple.

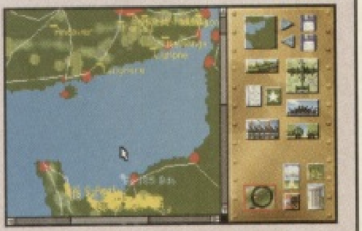
The 25 battles featured range from simple starter conflicts to full-blown campaigns, and are both varied in terms of the terrain on which they take place as well as the military hardware featured. There's also the dynamic campaign editor which can be used to chop and change existing battles or create completely new scenarios.

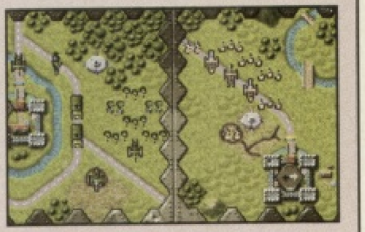
Campaign's unique appeal definitely comes from the 3D sequences though, in which tanks, armoured cars and aircraft can be piloted across the battlefield in a hectic blast-fest which makes a welcome change from the strategy element of the game.

Finally, there's Gunship 2000. This MicroProse classic remains possibly the finest helicopter sim ever, placing you in the cockpit of the multi-million dollar gunship. In true MicroProse style, Gunship is a realistic simulation which doesn't sacrifice authenticity for action, but don't be fooled into thinking that adrenaline-pumping blasting is a rare occurrence. Armed to the teeth with homing missiles, unguided rockets and cannons, the enemy assault is relentless as opposing gunships and ground forces fend off your attack.

Initially, as Warrant Officer, you'll fly missions in which a single chopper is under your control. Progress through the ranks, though, and you'll have the option of assuming command over five helicopters, like the AH-64 Apache, the Bell Super Cobra and the Comanche gunship, for example.

Packed with missions, Gunship 2000, like Combat Classics 3 in general, is challenging, varied and absorbing. The pack features three quality products for under 35 smackers, and althought the games are oldies, this really is excellent value for money.





EMPIRE/VARIOUS

(081) 343 7337

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 11Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 83%

Yours... for less than a Fiver

More multi-player action? Oh yes. This month we concentrate on Apogee's ultra-violent Doom-beater, Rise of the Triad. Those with a weak stomach had better turn the page...

Rise of the Triad

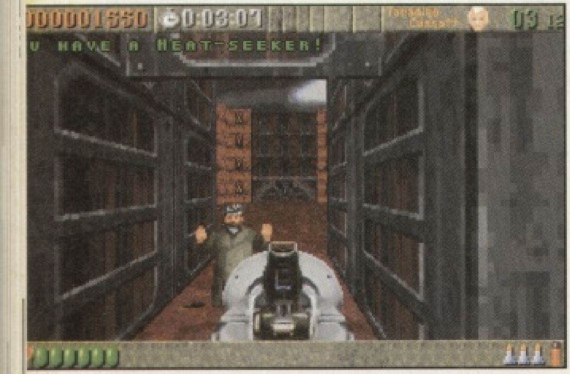
Apogee

Following on from our preview of Apogee's Rise of the Triad in issue 5 of PC GAMES, we've now laid our hands on the full shareware version of the game, and it ain't half bad, either!

Rise of the Triad, a cut-down version of which appears on CompuServe and a few other notable bulletin boards, is packed with many of the features found in the full game. Obviously, it bears a strong resemblance to Doom and indeed many of its imitators, but thankfully it's *actually* a very good clone and uses Apogee's new 3D engine to great effect. Graphically it's very slick and surprisingly detailed, and the Mortal Kombat-style digitised enemies work fairly well.

Set in a monastery filled with thugs packing guns (erm, not literally!), the aim of the game is a simple one. You're out to thwart the plans of a cult leader called El Oscuro, and this is achieved not by sitting down and discussing the problem diplomatically, but by slapping a fresh ammo cartridge in your Uzi and mowing down Oscuro's Nazi-esque henchmen before assassinating El Greaseball himself.

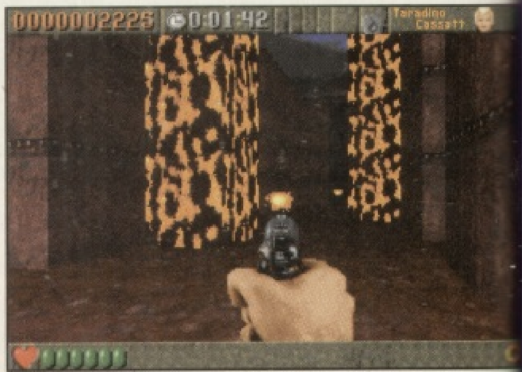
But for now you'll have to make do with a pistol, which thankfully never runs short of ammo. In fact a few of the less powerful weapons don't need reloading at all, like the rapid-firing MP40 machine gun for example. Progress on to the kick-ass bazooka or heat-seeking missile launcher and you'll find the ammunition is in frighteningly short supply, although extra shots can be found lying around each level.

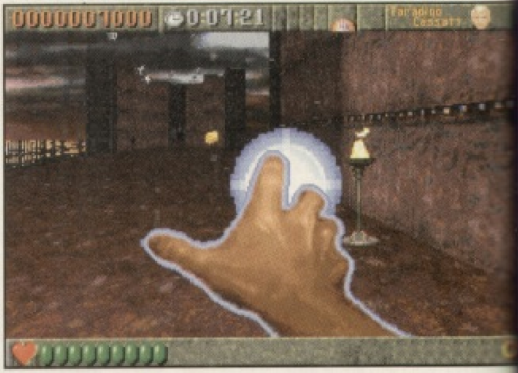


Like Doom, the keyboard is used to move around and to perform other actions, like shooting, running and activating switches. In the shareware version there is only a single character available, namely a square-jawed meat-head called Taradino Cassatt, although a total of five muscle-bound heroes are available in the full game.

Two game modes offer solo and multi-player action, the first a straightforward kill-or-be-killed scenario where it's you against the rest of the world. Enemies appear in greater numbers depending on which of the four difficulty settings you're playing, and as the game progresses the levels become gradually more intricate. Features like bounce pads are introduced, which catapult the player into the air, allowing them to clamber up to otherwise unreachable platforms. Moving walls plague many of the levels, along with spikes that spring up from the ground and fire pits which prove deadly should you wander too close.

The Comm-Bat game, which can be played by a single gamer as well as across a network, has two modes. The first is a bog-standard hunt-and-destroy scenario, while the second is a competition between the competing mercenaries to grab as many Triad icons within the specified time limit. This takes place in one of eight arenas, and elements such as gravity, speed and friction can be changed to add even more excitement to the action.





Considering that Rise of the Triad is a shareware game, it's pretty damn good. The 3D engine is almost as good as Doom's and graphically it's virtually faultless. Virtually. My only criticism is regarding the enemy sprites, which appear a little out of place and their Mortal Kombat-style makes them look distinctly amateurish. They also look silly flying through the air, arms and legs waving frantically, having just leapt onto one of the spring-pads! However, like Doom, Rise of the Triad is one helluva good shareware game, and anyone who's a fan of Id's classic (i.e. virtually everyone) will cream their Kevlar pants over this one.

- **Contact: CompuServe BBS (0171) 490 8881.**

OVERALL 90%

Where can I get this lovely **Shareware?**

If you're on the look-out for Shareware, here's a list of just some of the friendly and helpful Shareware libraries that you might like to try. Why not ask them to send you a catalogue of their games, or alternatively check this very magazine for adverts.

Transend Services Ltd
(0274) 622228
Testware UK Ltd
(0423) 886415
PD Soft
(0702) 4669

Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games so try to shop around to find the best deal.

You'll usually find that you'll pay by the disk, not by the game. This means that if one disk costs £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on three disks) will set you back £6. Postage & Packing is normally included and, if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

If you've got a modem, why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you an annual subscription fee.

After Hours BBS (0785) 228214
On-Line BBS (0839) 661199/88/77

These games are also available on Compuserve and the Internet.

Going on-line with **CompuServe**

If you have a PC and suitable communications software, you can log onto CompuServe immediately. CompuServe's London dial-up node accepts all modem speeds up to 14,400bps and can be reached by dialing (071) 490 8881. Simply dial this number and type in the following responses to the system requests:

HOST NAME:	CIS
USER ID:	177000,5606
PASSWORD:	EXPLORE/WORLD
AGREEMENT NUMBER:	UKPCGAME
SERIAL NUMBER:	93006

If you have any problems, simply call CompuServe's Freephone helpline on (0800) 289458.

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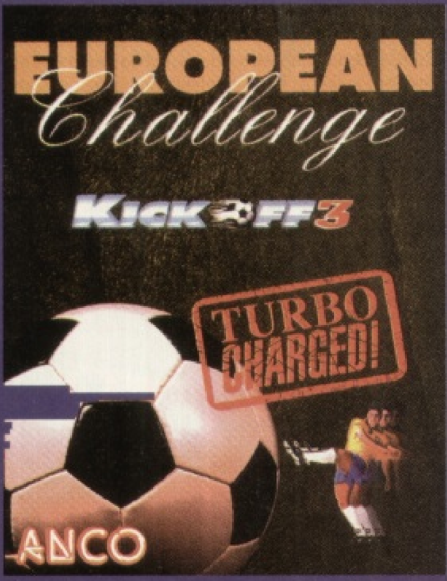
"Looks good...plays good" **James Binns, PC FORMAT**

"At last a soccer game with real depth for Amiga and PC players" **Paul Smith, MATCH MAGAZINE**

" The most complete football game ever" **Mark Patterson, C&VG**

"Fast pace, action and control with a huge amount of gameplay" **John Bennett, PC REVIEW**



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ANCO

© 1994 Anco Games Anco Software Ltd, 7 Millside Industrial Estate, Lawson Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 5BH Tel: 0322 292513 Fax: 0322 293422 Amiga: Min 1 Mb, 1 button, 2 button and CD32 joypad compatible
IBM PC: Min 386/33 MHZ VGA 2 button or Gravis joypad compatible. Soundblaster compatible. * Screen shots displayed are representative of IBM PC and Amiga 1200 versions only.

Power up

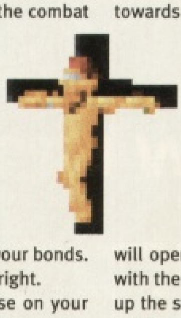
This month's jamboree bag of tips includes the third chunk of our System Shock guide, the final part of the Little Big Adventure solution, a complete player's guide to EA's bizarre Noctropolis and, if all that wasn't enough, we start the ball rolling with...

Ecstatica

It may be Alone In The Dark with curves, but Ecstatica is still a tough nut to crack. So, grab your incontinence pants and say your prayers as we guide you through this Psygnosis thriller...

*Cautious **First Steps...***

After the eerie intro, you'll enter the village and see the square in the distance, the church on the left, a shop on your right and the barn straight ahead. You'll need to find a suitable weapon pretty soon, of course, but first you might want to try out some of the combat moves on the little gremlin that pops out of the grass behind you. After beating it up, head towards the square.



At this point, the werewolf will leap out and knock you down (there's nothing you can do about it, I'm afraid) and you'll wake up dangling upside down in a long building with barrels along the left-hand wall. Wait until the werewolf has finished using you as a punchbag and then wriggle out of your bonds. Leave by the far door and head towards the right.

You'll then find yourself with a staircase on your right and a door to the left — plus a few of those gremlin-things. Walk through the door, ignoring the gremlins for the moment, and pick up the sword that you find there. Kill the gremlins with your new-found weapon, leave the building by the left door, head left and then take a left turn back into the village square. You should now be near the barn, so go straight across towards the buildings facing you and take the second door along.

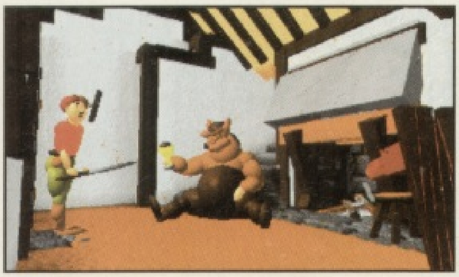
In this building you'll find a table, a large cupboard and some other pieces of furniture. Go over to the table and try to pick up the knife that rests on it. When the table attacks you, dispatch it with your sword (or your fists, for that matter) and then leave by the other door.

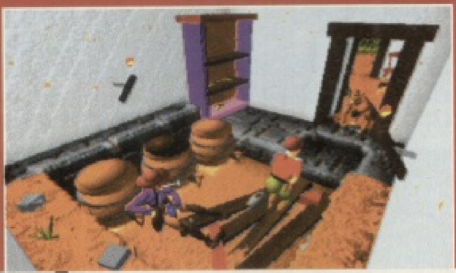
Go left, walk to the next door along (it will open when you approach it) and enter the house with the drunken, flatulent bear. Kill the bear and walk up the staircase. Read the diary on the table, grab the teddy bear and then nip upstairs where you'll find the witch's cooking pot and the magical recipe book.

***Hubble, Bubble,** Toil And Trouble*

Look at the spellbook and note the three required ingredients. Now leave the building and return to the village square. Walk into the barn (where the little girl is crying for her teddy) and throw the teddy bear. When the child drops down and asks you to play with her, follow her down through the church and into the crypt. Go through the doors that she opens and down the spiral staircase as far as you can go. When the apparition floats out of the ground, you'll automatically run away. Don't worry, it's perfectly natural.

Leave the crypt but, before you walk out of the church, pick up the stick lying next to the hanging priest. This is one of the ingredients in the recipe book, so run back to the witch's pot and drop the stick inside. Your next stop is the inn, which you can find if you take a right turn from your original starting position. The door will open when you approach it and, once inside, you should kill the green dragon with the sword (or the mace that's lying on the ground).





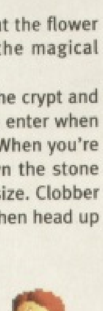
After quickly dispatching the fire-breathing dragon, help the old man to his feet and listen to him while he tells you the full story about the gruesome history of the village. When you finally reach his shop, wait until the old man has finished his sorry tale and then move over to the shelves in the corner of the room where another ingredient lies. When the werewolf shatters the door and bursts in, either fight him, run away, or hide casually in one of the nearby barrels. When it's nice and quiet, take the ingredient back to the cooking pot and throw it in. That's now two for the pot.

Flower ***Power***

There's only one more ingredient remaining: the flower. To get this head out of the village, past the scarecrow. Turn right half-way up the steps before you reach the crucifix, and pick up the flower on the pathway — remember to watch out for the minotaur at this point. Return to the pot once again and put the flower inside. You'll then automatically drink the magical brew and be transformed into a weasel.

In your new form, head back down to the crypt and run through the gap that was too small to enter when the child wanted to play with you earlier. When you're through the hole, turn left and walk down the stone corridors until you return to your natural size. Clobber any gremlins that have followed you and then head up the staircase to the frightened knight.

Don't Hurt Me, *Please!*



The old, whimpering knight will wail pitifully for mercy, and when you approach him, he'll drop his sword and beg you to leave. Pick up the sword and exit the room via the doorway. Now head out of the village again, but this time turn right at the crucifix and walk along the the pathway. When you can see the castle, take a sharp right, go straight through a stone circle, go left and around a bit until you come to the edge of a lake.

Find the stone plinth, stand on it and watch as you automatically cast the sword into the lake. The saucy but mysterious Lady Of The Lake will now surface and dub you a Knight. Now, Sir, head left and walk up the pathway towards the castle. Climb up the small staircase at the right-hand side of the castle and talk to the magician at the top. Follow him and listen to his ramblings. He will lead you to the tower and, once there, go down the stairs.

At the bottom of the tower is a rather large gollum carrying a mace. Don't try and kill him, but try to sneak past without injuring yourself. Keep walking until you get to an enormous cavern with some swords and shields scattered on the floor. Like the table that you encountered earlier, these will suddenly come to life but they aren't too difficult to beat.

When you've beaten the ghostly weaponry, go up the stairs to another room, turn right and stand in the corner to avoid being flame-grilled by the stone dragon. Run past the huge limestone lizard and tip-toe down the staircase. You should try to be on the right-hand side as you view the scene, and stop on the bottom step just before the landing — by the way, this is a great place to save the game.

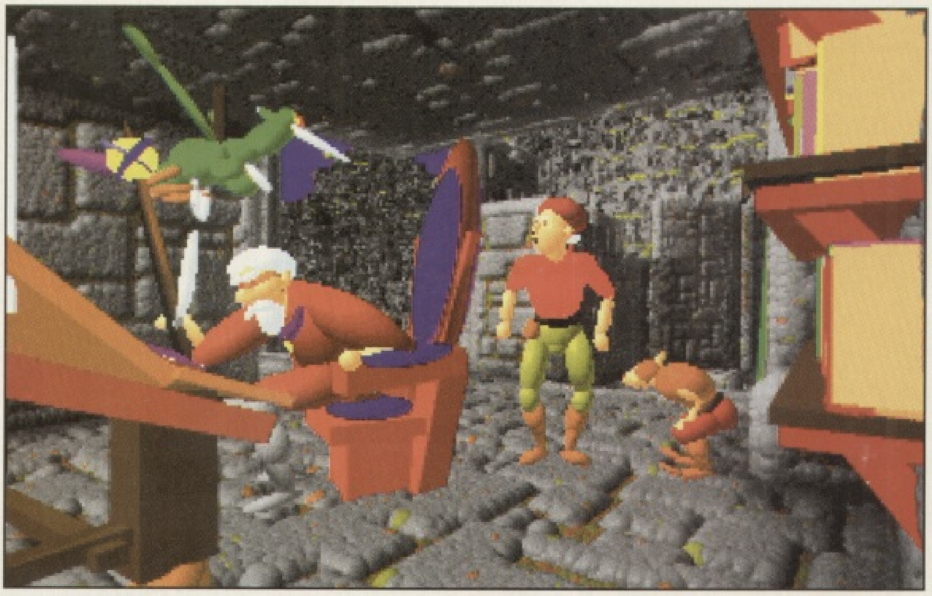
I Get The ***Point***

Position yourself so you can make your way straight across both landings and then *run* across, avoiding the spikes. Go through the doorway at the end where you'll find two sarcophagi — one contains

Run For The **Hills!**

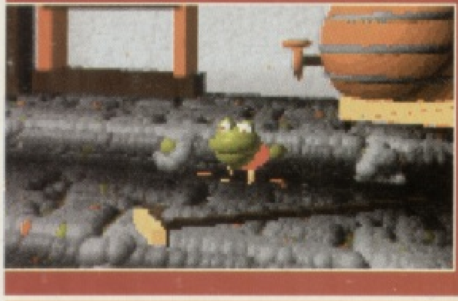
Unfortunately, both the werewolf and the minotaur cannot be killed, and they remain a thorn in your side throughout the game. In general the werewolf roams the village, while the minotaur patrols the locations outside. By far the easiest tactic as far as the two of them is concerned is to run away, but if you're going to do this, try to lead them away from where you eventually want to get to.

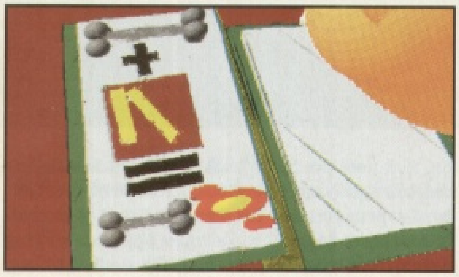
The werewolf is fast, cunning and quick with his paws, but the minotaur, although slower, is just as deadly. If any of them trap you in a corner, batter them relentlessly with whatever you're holding at the time until they back off with a bloody nose. Then, while they lick their wounds, run away. As fast as you bloody well can.

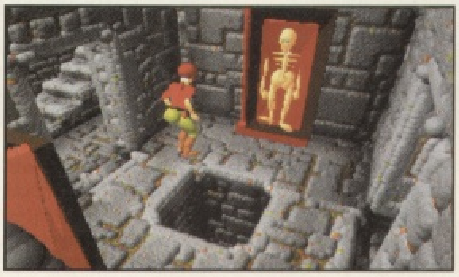


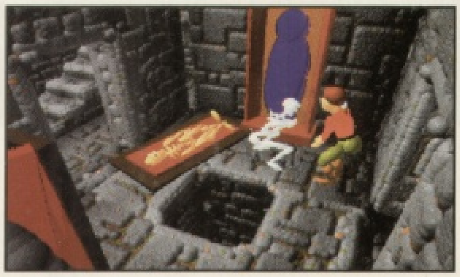
It's A *Frog's Life!*

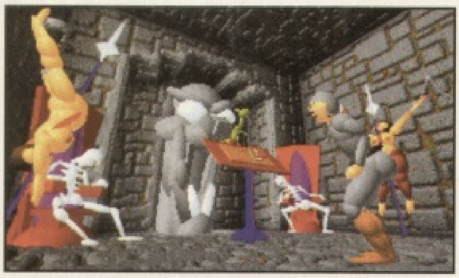
If you're unfortunate enough to be turned into a small, green amphibian then you need to jump straight out of the castle (via the side steps) and then head along the path until you reach a small house. Approach the door and it will swing open automatically. Go in and greet your buxom princess with a croak and smile to be returned to normal. Oh, and forget about the broom that you find here — it's absolutely useless.











an angry skeleton, the other a lightweight suit of armour. Slip on the armour, leave this room through the other doorway and head straight across through an entrance into another room. Listen to the green chap, then pick up the Book Of Magic on the podium and leave, turning to the right to find another entrance which leads downstairs to the harem.

Despite high hopes, there's nothing much to see here so move along. Turn right to go down through another opening and enter a room that has flames rising from the floor. Here, you'll find a king sitting on a throne and you'll be attacked by an exact copy of your own good self. Once you've murdered your evil twin, greet the king and head back to the room with the green chap in it. The large stone head should now have disappeared. Hurrah for that, eh?

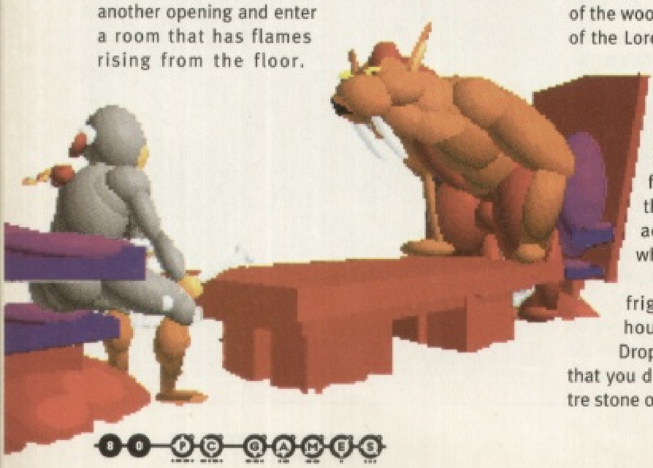
Next, you need to go to the stone circle outside the castle. Leave, retracing your steps firstly down the stairs and then under the stone dragon — although don't forget to save the game again before you try to climb these stairs. When you're safely past the spiky hazards, slip out of the castle and run to the stone circle. Drop the Book Of Magic in the middle and head back into the village again.

Religion Is For ***Wimps***

Go to the church in the village and pick up the bible which lies next to the altar. Armed with the Word Of God, go to the monastery which you can find by following the path where you found the flower. Stand in front of the wooden doors and you'll automatically read part of the Lords Prayer (in Latin, no less). The monks will then allow you to enter the monastery.

Inside the monastery, there are only two rooms: one contains an altar and the other is a library. Pick up the ancient relic that lies on the altar and either (a) run away from the monks, or (b) ruthlessly skewer them all with your sword. Whatever course of action you decide to use, leave via the hole which can be found in the library.

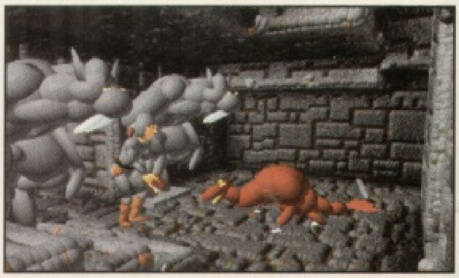
The hole eventually leads back to the frightened knight in the village. Leave this house and take the relic to the stone circle. Drop your sword and pick up the book of magic that you dropped there earlier. Now, stand in the centre stone of the circle.

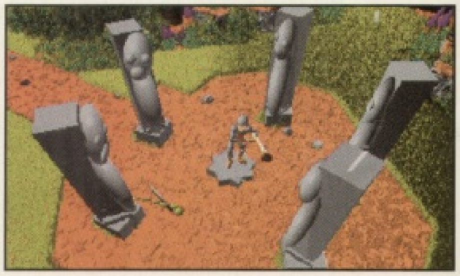


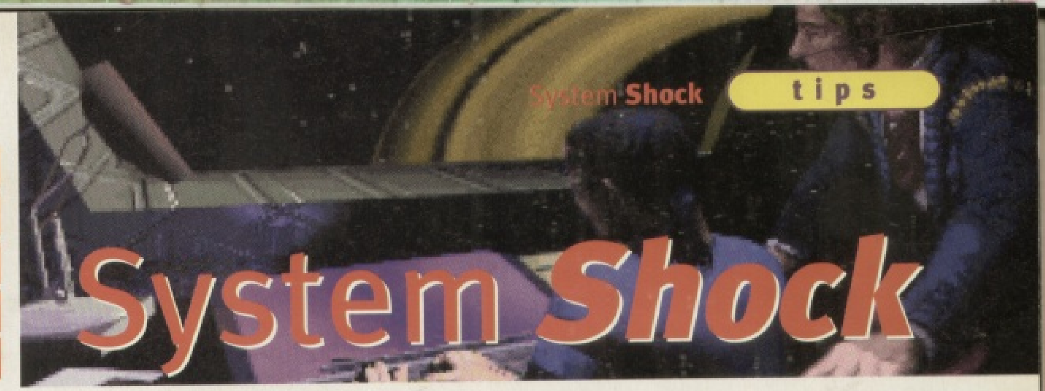
Frying ***Tonight***

After the spectacular pyrotechnics, head back to the room where the little green chap greeted you so enthusiastically the first time. Walk cautiously through the open door and down the steps into the large cavern (the one you originally ran away from).

Take a seat at the table and listen. Don't believe the rot about the demon being perfect and back away from the table. With any luck, the demon will get annoyed and transform and, if you're standing far enough away, you can use the relic as a medieval flamethrower to toast the demon and save the village. Congratulations — you've done it! Now get on your horse and ride off into the sunset...







System Shock

Time is running out for planet Earth, so once again PC GAMES rushes to the rescue to stop the rogue computer Shodan from fulfilling its evil plot...

Last month you were flush with victory after scuppering Shodan's plan to toast Earth's population with the mining laser. However, it's got back-up plans, and this month we're going to put its mutation virus out of harm's way for good.

Pavorski's Last Stand

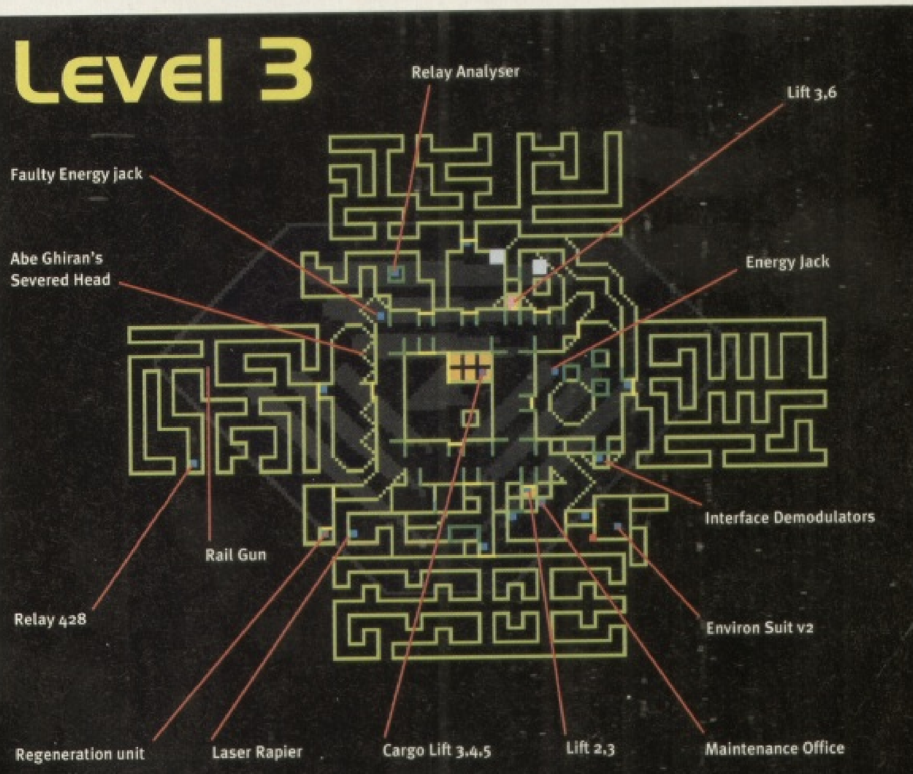
First, though, a little rescue mission. Head down to Level 5 as quickly as your cursor keys will carry you, because there are still some people alive down there, lead by the capable Anna Pavorski. Hurrah! Travel from the elevator on Level 2 to Level 3, and across to the lift to Level 6. There, rush past the Cyberspace jack to the Level 5/6 lift and head back up.

Once you're on Level 5 go west and south to the central corridor and move clockwise to the eastern blast doors. Pass through Flight Bay 3 and into the heart of Shodan's lair on this level. Flip the regenerator on, and go for the next door, marked 'Grey'. The survivors are along there.

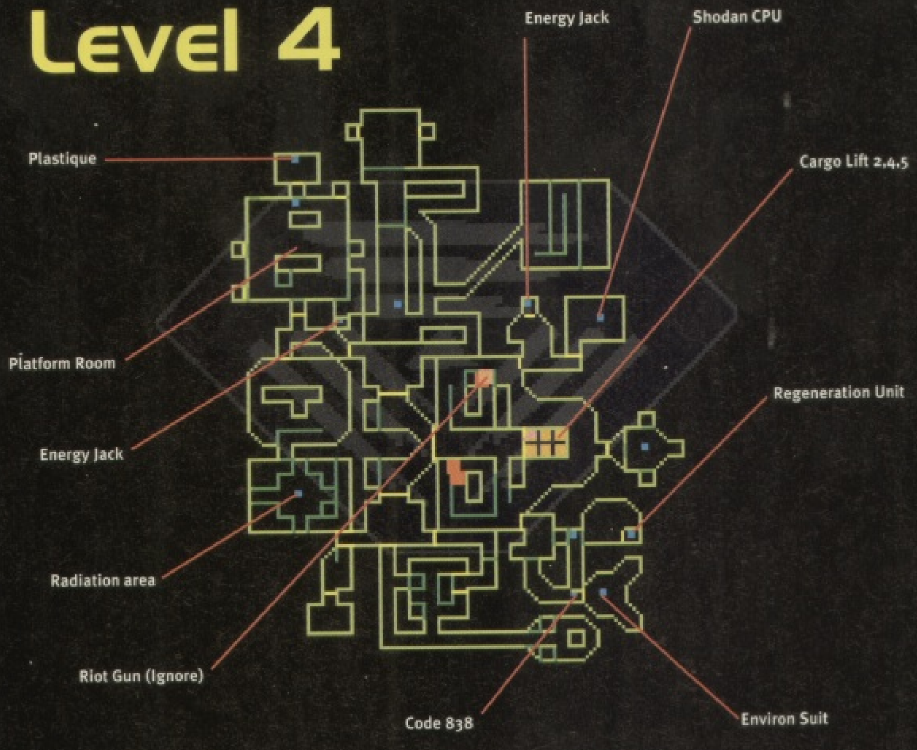
Unfortunately, by the time you charge into their room you'll find that the cavalry's come too late. Bummer. Fortunately, however, apart from a wounded Cortex Reaver, these brave souls left you several clues as to what to expect later on in the game. It seems that Shodan's concentrating his efforts on downloading himself into terrestrial computers via antenna relays on the engineering level.

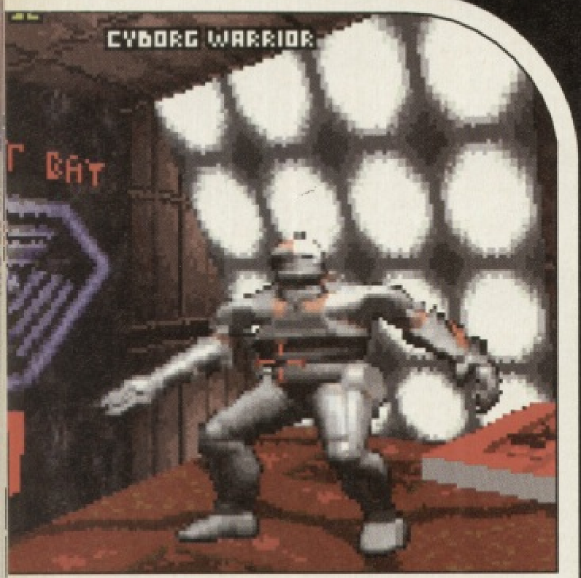
Before that becomes a problem, though, you'll have to stop the virus in Beta grove from being released to plague Earth (quite literally).

Level 3


Relay Analyser
Lift 3,6
Faulty Energy jack
Abe Ghiran's Severed Head
Energy Jack
Interface Demodulators
Rail Gun
Relay 428
Environ Suit v2
Regeneration unit
Laser Rapier
Cargo Lift 3,4,5
Lift 2,3
Maintenance Office

Level 4


Energy Jack
Shodan CPU
Plastique
Cargo Lift 2,4,5
Platform Room
Regeneration Unit
Energy Jack
Radiation area
Riot Gun (Ignore)
Code 838
Environ Suit


CYBORG WARRIOR
BAT

On The Level

The way to remove the virus threat is to jettison Beta grove on the executive level, and since that's a big task involving quite a few stages, you'll be traveling around several levels to achieve your goal.

The first thing you can do is clear Level 5, by the end of which you should have a blaster (you can ditch the sparq now), an assault rifle, lots of nifty hardware, and some juicy ammo for your weapons. Be careful to avoid the high radiation area, since it's also chocka with Sec-1 robots. You can't get to the life-pods yet — and don't need to — so when you're done go to the goods lift in the middle of the level and head up to Level 3.

At this stage you can only clear the central area and a few adjacent rooms, but even this can be tough. There are translucent mutants all over the place who fire plasma balls at you, and they're really difficult to see in the dark. Use your lantern, target them early, and get to the regeneration area quickly.

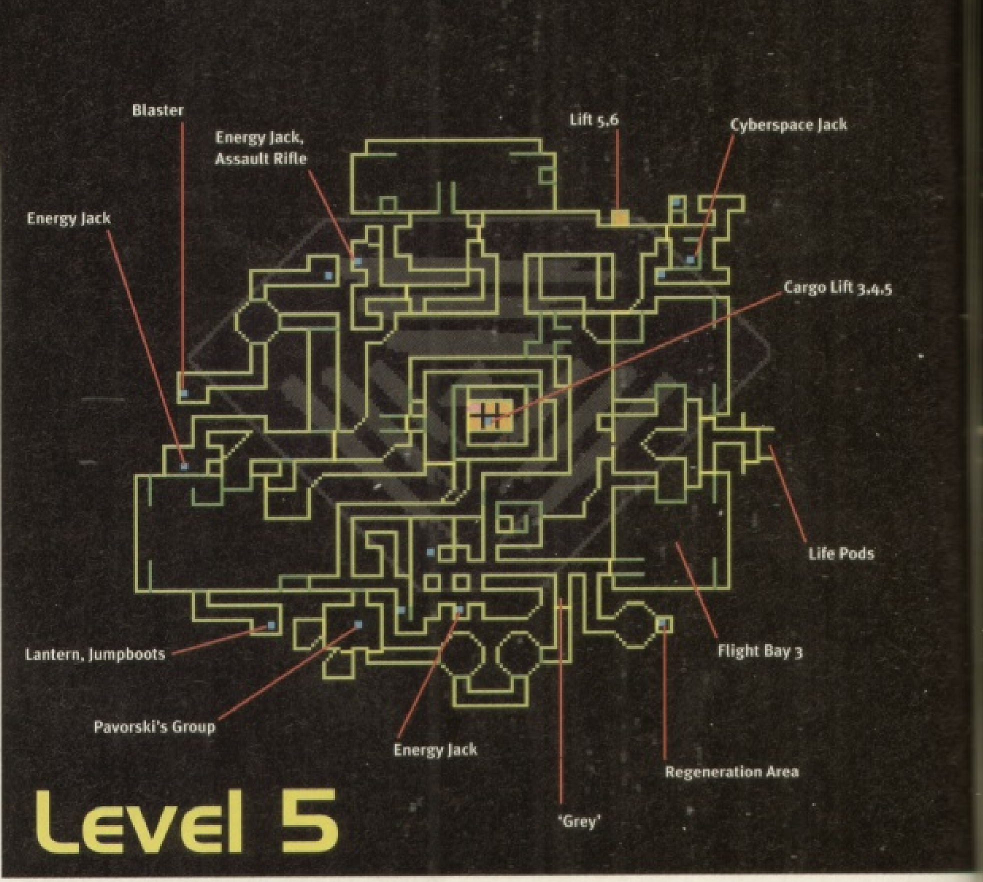
Then clear the eastern room with the energy jack (avoid the faulty one, since it drains your health while giving you energy). Take one interface demodulator, which you'll want a little later on, and jump back into the cargo lift to Level 4. Later you'll want the severed head of Abe Ghiran to get past the retinal scan in the maintenance office, but not yet.

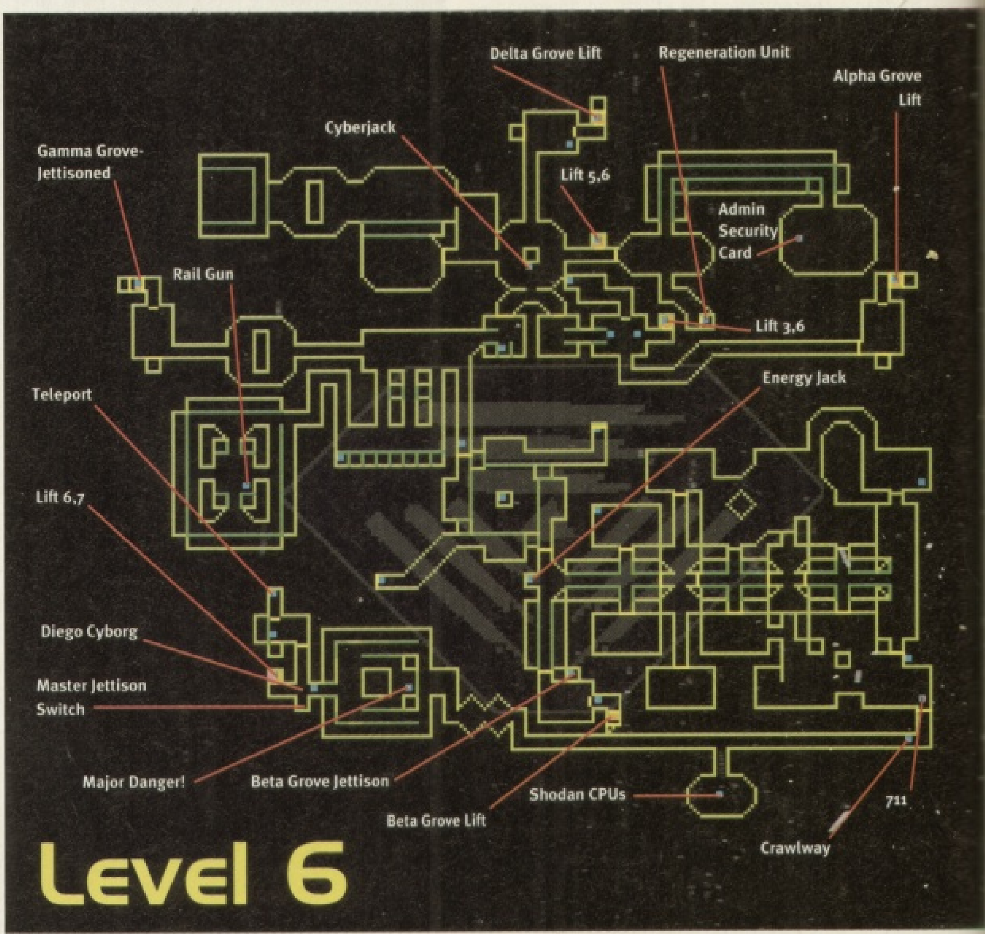
The storage level is pretty easy all round. You'll want four packs of plastique explosive from the most northwesterly room, which can be a bit difficult, but other than that you shouldn't have too many problems. To get the explosives you've got to push a switch on the ground that's hidden by a crate to the north of the room, and jump from catwalk to catwalk up above and destroy cyborg warriors along the way. Eventually you'll arrive at a viewing gallery to the north where your prize awaits.

When you have the plastique, clear the rest of the areas, making sure that you have the environ-suit, and make your way to Level 6 (via the cargo lift to Level 5).

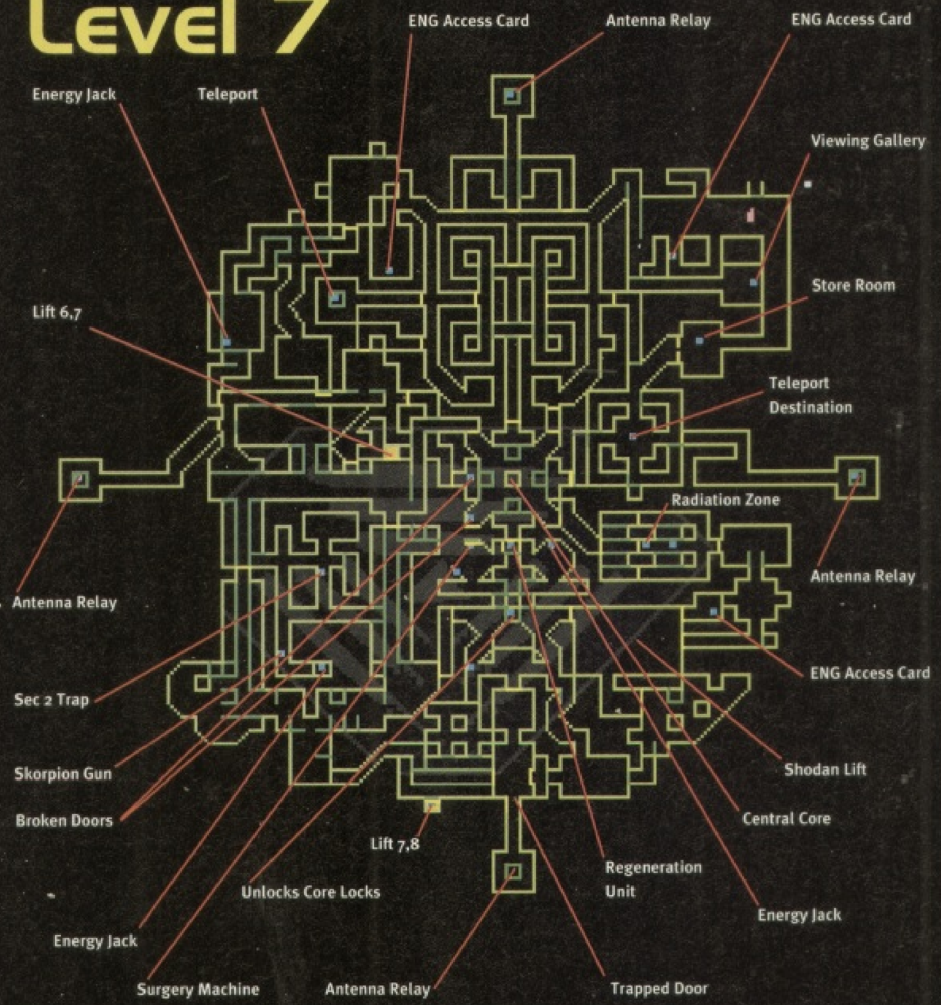
After the ease of Level 4, the executive level has several very nasty bits. In the little group of rooms to the east of the lift you'll come across the regeneration area, as well as the admin access card, which will be your flexible friend on this level.

Next, you'll pass the Cyberspace terminal, so jack in and unlock the Beta grove door on your way through. Then move on to Alpha and Delta groves, where there aren't any regenaration stations so be careful not to die. They're only little sub-levels, but explore them thoroughly and hit the jettison enable controls on each.


Blaster
Energy Jack, Assault Rifle
Lift 5,6
Cyberspace Jack
Energy Jack
Cargo Lift 3,4,5
Life Pods
Lantern, Jumpboots
Flight Bay 3
Pavorski's Group
Energy Jack
Regeneration Area
'Grey'
Level 5


Delta Grove Lift
Regeneration Unit
Alpha Grove Lift
Cyberjack
Gamma Grove-Jettisoned
Lift 5,6
Admin Security Card
Rail Gun
Lift 3,6
Energy Jack
Teleport
Lift 6,7
Diego Cyborg
Master Jettison Switch
Major Danger!
Beta Grove Jettison
Shodan CPUs
Beta Grove Lift
711
Crawlway
Level 6

Level 7


ENG Access Card
Antenna Relay
ENG Access Card
Energy Jack
Teleport
Viewing Gallery
Store Room
Lift 6,7
Teleport Destination
Radiation Zone
Antenna Relay
Antenna Relay
Sec 2 Trap
ENG Access Card
Skorpion Gun
Shodan Lift
Broken Doors
Central Core
Lift 7,8
Regeneration Unit
Unlocks Core Locks
Energy Jack
Energy Jack
Surgery Machine
Antenna Relay
Trapped Door

Double-click to search
DESTROYED SERV-BOT

Shodan's rewired the overall enable mechanism, so you have to enable these as well, in order to jettison Beta grove.

With an environ-suit and the door open, you can next go to Beta itself (stopping off to pick up the rail gun on the way), which is a bit of a sod all over. Your suit doesn't stop all the bio-nastiness, so your health will be slowly sapped, as will your energy for using the suit. Prepare a medikit or two, and a couple of batteries, to perk yourself up as you tour the grove. Hit the jettison enable, get the V3 mapping unit, and high-tail it out of there.

Sadly, to get rid of the grove isn't as easy as switching the jettison button next to the grove. Nosirree. First you'll have to flip the master switch, which is guarded by numerous nasties in the room before the switch, and only accessible from the maintenance crawlway (Access 711). Nastiest of all is the cyborg of Edward Diego, your erstwhile boss, who is now a shielded exec-bot with some very heavy firepower at his disposal. Penetrator shells in the assault rifle — and lots of them — are needed to deck this particular cyborg. You need to shoot plenty of rounds pretty sharpish, because when Diego starts firing, you start dying.

In his quarters you'll find the master switch for jettisoning the grove, but it's busted. Damn. Time to use the teleport to get back to the start of the level, travel to the maintenance level, and fix the switch. With the maintenance level automatically notified of the fault, all the doors you couldn't open are now available to you, so check out the diagnostic log in the office and use your interface demodulator (yes, there was a use for it) on relay 428. Watch out for invisible mutants and several Sec-1 bots. Afterwards you can use Abe's head to pass the retinal scan at the maintenance office and collect the environ-suit V2.

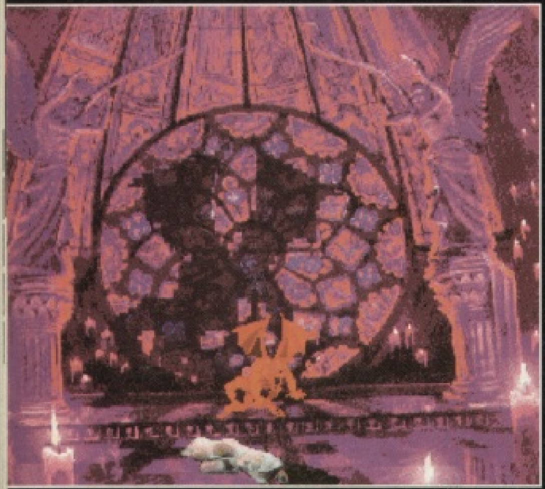
Now that the switch is fixed you have to hoof it back to the executive level, throw the switch, and then go to the Beta grove lobby and jettison it. Shodan'll be angry as usual, but still extremely defiant. It's time to stop him using those antennae on the engineering level to escape the station and cause more havoc, this time on the planet's surface.

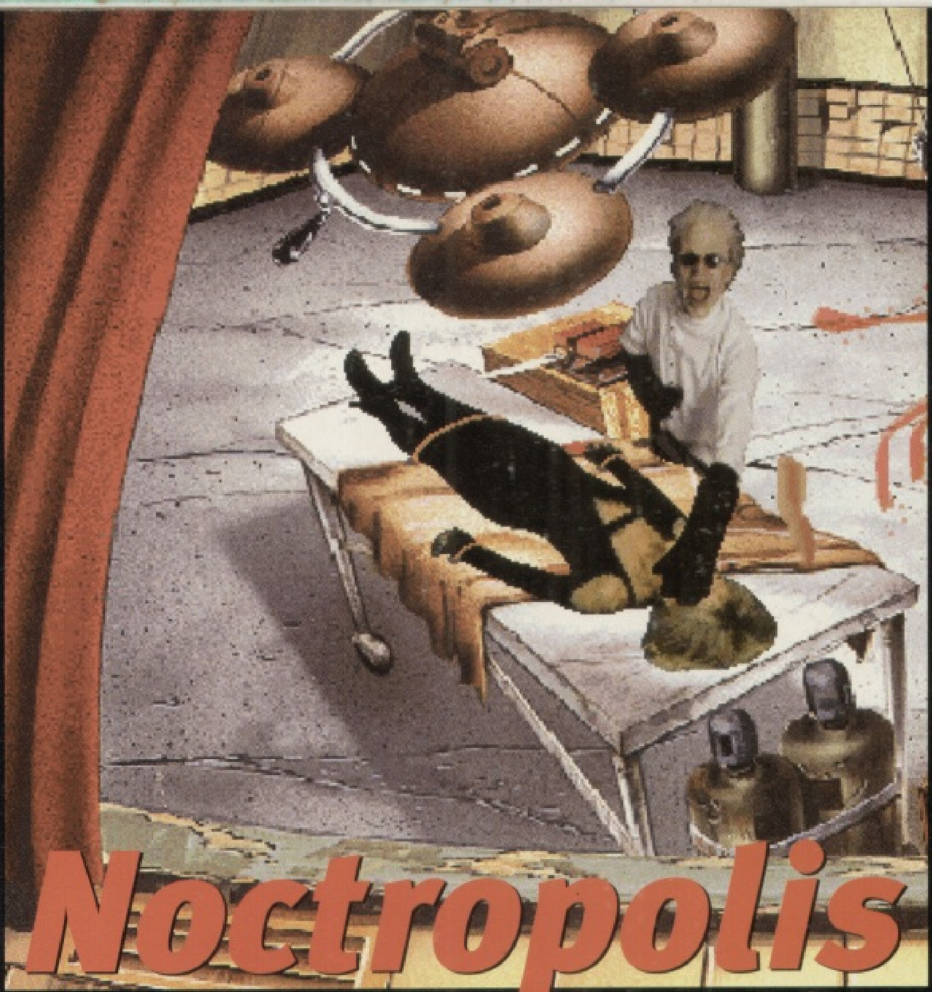
Coming Soon: The Big Bang (x4)

Diego's personal lift takes you to Level 7, which is far tougher than anything you've met till now. You're hunting for four antennae, while being hunted by hoards of Sec-1 and Sec-2 robots. Worse, you can't get to the regeneration room near the start until you've battled your way through much of the level.

Before starting, get healthy, check your energy's up to full, and take a deep breath. Next month we'll look at the rest of System Shock, from marooning Shodan on the station to scuttling the reactor and escaping in a life-pod. Till then, may your implants never malfunction and your assault rifle not be short on penetrator shells...

Being your favourite comic hero isn't quite the laugh you think it would be, as Peter Grey discovers in EA's dark graphic adventure. But now you can help him save the day with this complete solution...





Noctropolis

You start the game in your bookstore. Open the door to your office and walk through. Get the ticket stub (which is on the table), and then get the letter from Cygnus publishing and the Darksheer comic, which you should read. Walk back into the shop and, when the doorbell rings, answer it (by TALKing to the door, strangely enough). Give the ticket stub to the courier and take the package. Inside is a new Darksheer comic, which you should also read. Now use the silver token to travel to Noctropolis...

Down On Main Street

Talk to the newspaper vendor, and interrogate him about everything. Give him the comic, and you should get a newspaper in return. Now select the TRAVEL menu option and go to the cathedral...

Outside the cathedral, talk to the boy. Now get the wire and move the fence to get a spike. Open the access panel on the lamp post, then use the wire and the fence spike. Enter the cathedral and go to the confessional booth. Talk to Father Desmond until he gives you the jawbone. Now return to Main Street.

Stiletto's Pad

Go to Stiletto's apartment and talk to the door, then to Stiletto herself. Whatever you say, you won't be able to persuade her to join you at this stage, so go to the Hall Of Records instead. Use the jawbone, then talk to the clerk about the mausoleum before actually going there.

Outside the mausoleum, open the gate and the side door and go inside. Look at the tag on the coffin, then move the corpse to get a key. Use the key to open the coffin and then GO TO coffin. After the Succubus attacks, move the statue. Get the lace and go down the steps, then get the spear from the small statue. Move the pillow and look at the diary, then use the spear. Now return to the cathedral again.

Let Us Prey

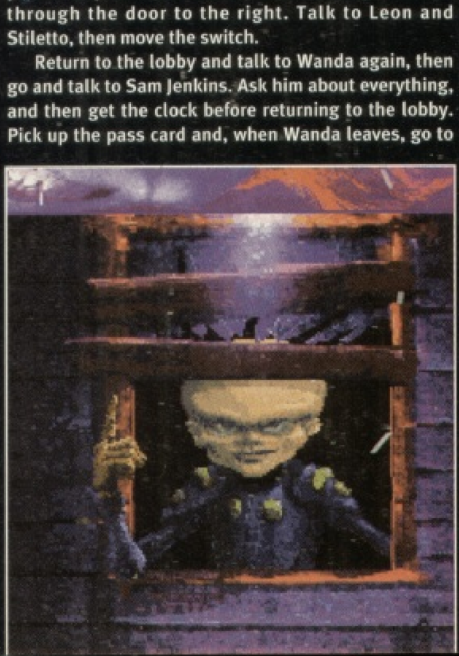
Talk to Father Desmond again, and look at the altar – eventually you should find a bomb. Move the pillow and get the detonator. Then get the chalice and get the holy water from the font. When the Succubus is attacking Stiletto and she calls out for help, use the holy water to save her skin. You'll now be taken to the mysterious Shadowlair...

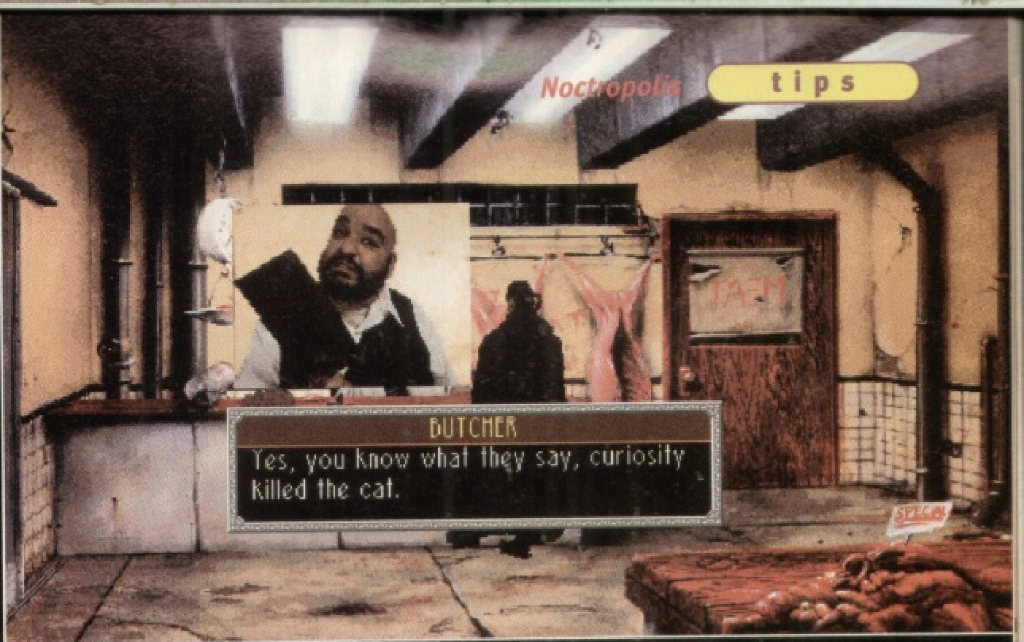
In the Lair, examine and open the panel in the right pillar to find a secret compartment containing your Darksheer costume and a grenade, and examine and open the panel to the right of the fountain to find the History Of Darksheer book and the Noctroglyph. Now head off to the Bornick Mansion...

Maniac Mansion

Talk to Mrs Bornick and ask her about everything. Now go to the Sunspire site, and talk to the guard there until you find out about Sam Jenkins. Now go to Cygnus (phew – all this travelling around!) and talk to Wanda, then ask her for some iced water. Tell her you'll help sort out the air conditioning, then go through the door to the right. Talk to Leon and Stiletto, then move the switch.

Return to the lobby and talk to Wanda again, then go and talk to Sam Jenkins. Ask him about everything, and then get the clock before returning to the lobby. Pick up the pass card and, when Wanda leaves, go to





BUTCHER

Yes, you know what they say, curiosity killed the cat.

the lift. Use the pass card and then the logbook to get to the top of the building, and talk to Ms Shoto. Finally, return to the lobby and head off for the Incarnate offices...

At the offices, talk to the guard. Then go to the Neon Noose and talk to Drake until he mentions Nunio Schwarz. Now return to the Sunspire site. Look at the van and talk to the guard, then talk to Stiletto. Sneak past the guard and walk to the lift. Move the bricks, then move the lift motor. Get the glass from the bucket, and then the glass cutter from the ground. Leave and go the Cygnus building again.

Now head for Main Street and talk to the newspaper vendor about the greenhouse, then go there. Use the glass cutter to get inside. After you've been attacked, use the grenade. Go back outside, get the poster and then go to the truck. Get the seeds and the quick-grow solution.

A Night At The Opera

Before doing anything else, return to the Lair to heal, then go to Main Street again and chat to the newspaper vendor about the opera. Now go to the Hall Of Records and ask the clerk about the opera too. Finally, go the opera hall, ignore the prostitute and go inside.

Now travel to the observatory. Use the Noctroglyph and go through the gate. Use the seeds and the quick-grow to make a hole in the wall, which you should then go through. The next bit requires some pretty sharp 'n' precise timing, so before going any further, SAVE YOUR GAME! Done that? Good, then we'll continue...

First get the screwdriver, then walk from left to right, carefully avoiding the light beams. Get the oil can. Get onto the lift, get the logbook and use the screwdriver and the oil. Get the lens and SAVE THE GAME AGAIN! Now make your way back via the same path and then head for the opera hall.

You'll soon be captured by Top Hat, but don't worry because it's completely unavoidable. After being taken prisoner, ask the janitor to help you. Get the knives and the brick, then stand on the trapdoor and use the brick. In the dressing room, get the make-up kit and the jewelry. Move the costumes and go through. Get the screwdriver and use it. Move the valve and then get the hose.

Go outside and then talk to the gang. Offer them the knives and then the jewelry to find out where Stiletto is. After returning to the Shadowlair to heal, go back to Main Street. Ask the oh-so-handy newspaper vendor about the butcher, then go there.

Fresh Meat!

Ask the butcher about his lovely sausages and offer to trade him the paper to get some. Now go through the left door, get the hook and move the meat carcasses. Now go down.

There will be some more unavoidable unpleasantness, which will result in Dr Macabre tying you to a table. Once the sequence is over, move the beaker and the cart. Get a beaker from the shelf and go through the door. Next, use the beaker to get the acid and head right.

Go through the fan blades. Get the wheel and use the shard of glass to cut the rope. Now go back through the fan blades and use the rope. Leave via the right exit. Use the acid to cross the water and go through the door. Now go through the first door of the catwalk and get the rebar. Go back to the catwalk and use the rebar. Go left, use the rope and get the net.

Return to the room where you found the rebar and go through the pipe. Go to the end of the tunnel and talk to the creature. Offer him the make-up, then move the pegs in the door until the colours are lined up with the arrows. Return once more to the Shadowlair and heal yourself.

In Yer Dreams

Head off for the Dream Realms fun park. Get the paint and then go inside Mr Smiles. Go into the clown's mouth and get the pick, then exit. Use the pick to get inside the funhouse, then get a match. Go back inside Mr Smiles and enter the tower. Get the torch and then leave again.

Move the screen and go into the torn forest. Use the match, and then get the egg sack and a piece of web. Now go back to the tower and use the egg sack, then get the diamond. Return to the funhouse and use the diamond, then move the shaker and get the pepper. Return to Mr Smiles, enter the clown head again and use the pepper. Get the paint brush. Leave, and then use the paint. Go through the door, use the web and go to the tower window. Move the mat and get the key, then talk to Dreamer.

Now head back to the Cygnus building and talk to Ms Shoto once again.

What A Boiler!

Leave the Cygnus building and get the wrought iron shaft from the lamp post, then use it. Go down through the manhole and open the furnace. Get the broken chair pieces and use them. Go down and talk to Whisperman.

Return to the Cygnus building, enter the lift and use the logbook. At the top of the building, use the meat hook, then get the duct tape from the stairs. Go up and get the rope, then go up again and get the broom. Go up once more, go to the landing and use the rope, then use the sausage. Use the hook again, then use the broom and the hook. After talking to Flux, use the gold token to destroy him... And, er, that's it — you done it! Huzzah!

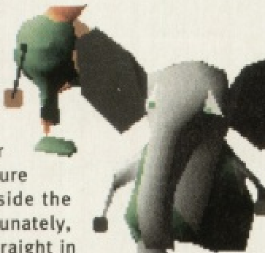
COURIER

In this package I hold sleeps a tale to be told, and I find it a thrill to know that it's filled with your future. Are you?

Jetpack robberies, mutants and a desperate swordfight to the death... Yes, prepare to save the planet in the last part of our solution to the very fabulous Little Big Adventure.

Little Big Adventure

Close Proximity



Last month we left you sailing towards Proxima Island. Now we rejoin the thrilling action after you have docked at Proxim City, where you'll discover that LeBorgne's treasure lies close at hand inside the local museum. Unfortunately, you can't just walk straight in because you will be recognised, slapped around the face and dumped back in jail. No, you're going to need to do something a little more elaborate.

Firstly, talk to the hairdryer salesman and buy a hairdryer for 30 Kashes. After this, pop into the building next to the sleeping guard and talk to the elephant. He'll tell you about the security system in the museum and the pressure-sensitive floors. While you're here, use the gratings to explore the sewers underneath the city — you'll need to use them later.

Leave the building and head back towards the dock. Open the gate next to the museum where you'll find a shop and a small house. If you've come across a coffee pot in your travels, give it to the elephant who lives in the house, and in return he'll give you a list that reveals the locations of all the clover leaves in the game. Talk to him again and he'll give you an electronic keypad which opens a door in the Teleportation Centre — but you don't need this to finish the game.

Head towards the dock again and leave Proxim City by heading west onto a new screen. Enter the building that has a big hole in it and talk to the inventor. Give the hairdryer to the inventor and then offer to test the jetpack for him. He'll pay you 10 Kashes as well. Next, try to open the door to the other house on the screen (the one with the chain across the door).

When the Groboclone teleports in to stop you, defeat him with your magic ball and pick up the key that he drops. Open the chained door and talk to the rabbit that you find inside. He tells you that his brother is being held in Funfrock's HQ on Principal Island, and that he'll give you a red security card if you can find out how he's bearing up.

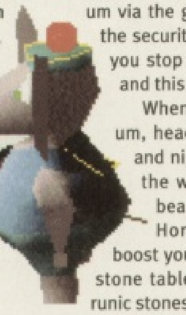
No problem. Travel all the way back to Principal Island and talk to the brother that you can see in the jail cell underneath the machine-gun emplacement. Sail back to Proxima Island and, true to his word, the rabbit will give you a red keycard. Now you've got everything you need to get LeBorgne's treasure.

Daylight Robbery

Use the red keycard to get into the museum (via the locked door) and have a good look around, noticing in particular the pirate's flag and the treasure chest on the upper level. When you're happy, head back but, instead of leaving the museum through the door, use the grate in the floor to enter the sewers.

In the sewers, head up into the jail area (using the lift) and, when the elephant has his back turned, push the button on the wall. When the alarm sounds, return to the sewers (past the jail and through the small panel in the wall) and enter the museum again using the grating that you lowered earlier. Ah-ha!

Once inside the museum, use the jetpack to fly above the pressure sensitive floors. When you're hovering, don't try to use your weapons or the jetpack will cut out and you'll set even more alarms off. In the first room, stand on the pirate flag display and get the flag (this will allow you to get to Rebellion Island).



Next, head upstairs and follow the wall around until you get to the treasure chest. Search the chest to find the ancestral key and then escape from the museum via the grate. Take care in the museum to avoid the security robots. Remember you can't be seen if you stop moving, so just point Twinsen at a wall and this should do the trick.

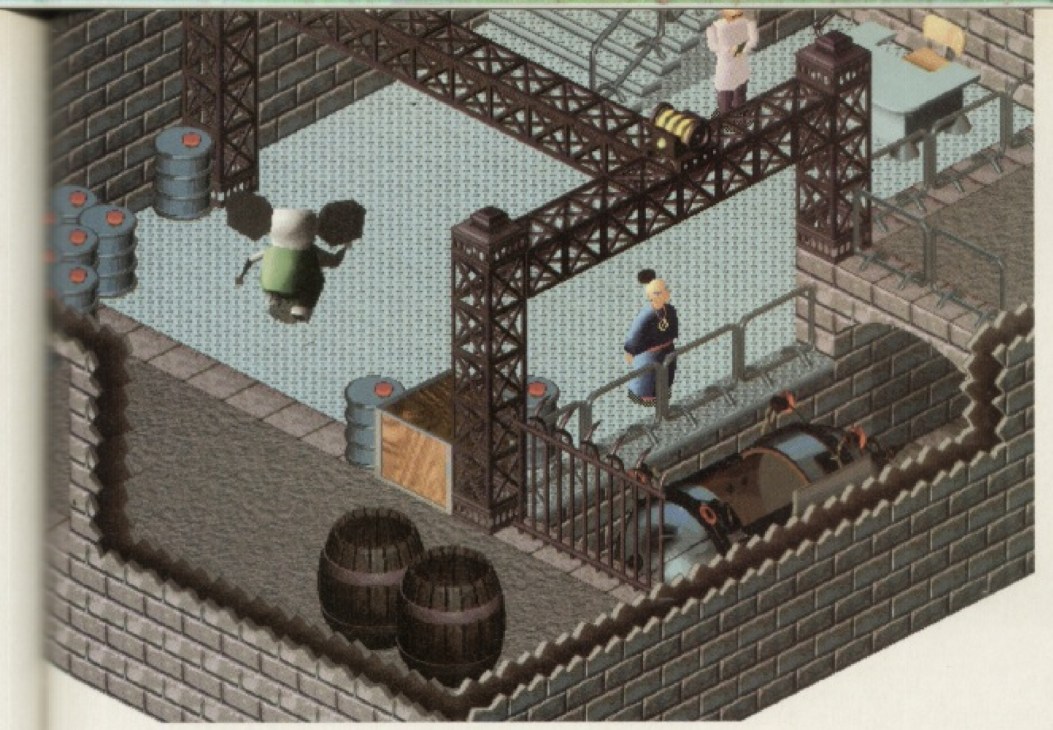
When you've escaped safely from the museum, head back to your house on Citadel Island and nip into the cavern (either via the barrel in the wine cellar or the cave entrance on the beach). Open the door and pick up Gawley's Horn and Sendell's Medallion which will boost you up to the third level of magic. Read the stone tablet on the wall to learn about the three runic stones and then use the Horn on the 'S' symbol to reveal five clover leaves. Finally, wander back to your catamaran, use the pirate flag with it and then set sail for Rebellion Island.

You Say You Want A Revolution...

When you arrive on the war-torn isle, head towards the bunker to talk to the Rabbibunny soldier. He'll instruct you to drive the buggy to see the leaders of the Rebellion who are hiding out several miles away. On arriving at the rebel camp, talk to the Spheroid underneath the camouflage netting and he'll ask you to rescue Colonel Kroptman, the leader of the Rebellion, who is apparently being held in a snow fort in the Hamalayi mountains. Stock up your gas supply before you leave the camp, then drive back to the harbour, seek out the commando rabbit and talk to him. You'll automatically jump into the landing craft for the assault on the mountain fortress.

Walking In A Winter Wonderland

The landing craft will drop you off at the foot of the Hamalayi mountains, and you and the commando must battle it out against Funfrock's forces. Don't forget to note where your catamaran drifts to — you'll need it again later. The Rabbibunny commando will follow you about, so if there's something you can't



quite destroy with your magic ball, let the rabbit let them have it with a grenade or two. If you haven't done so already, make sure you destroy the transmitter on top of the first building — if you leave it active, the fortress will be able to call for help.

Continue battling your way left, dispatching the soldiers and the gun emplacements, until the commando suggests that you commandeer a tank. The tank will automatically trundle along to the gates of the fortress, where it will blow them apart so you can enter. Once inside, kill the soldier and the two robot Rabbibunnies and open the big doors stamped with an 'F'. Dash up the staircase, killing the two guards and picking up the keys that they drop. Dispatch the white-coated scientist to get the third key and enter the door on the right — ignore the other two, as they only lead back to each other.

When you've made it through the door, open the gate and get rid of the red Grobo using your magic ball. Grab the key that the Grobo drops and free Colonel Kroptman from his cell. Walk right, get rid of the final Grobo and then escape through the small hatch in the wall. Outside, walk off the screen to the right and enjoy the snowy cutscene.

Taking The Piste

After the animation, grab the snowboard and ski down to the bottom of the mountain. Chat to the guy at the ski-lift (or ski again if you have an overwhelming urge to try a different run) and then follow the edge of the screen along to the right, until you get to an exit located between two trees.

On the next screen, save the townsfolk from the mutants and talk to all of them. Pick up the clover leaf that the rabbit digs up, and then walk to the centre of the village to examine the cauldron of soup. As soon as you touch it, another rabbit will appear who offers to show you the sacred carrot if you destroy Funfrock's mutant factory.

When you agree, follow the female rabbit to the bottom of the screen, where she will open a secret passage. You can use this passage to return to the catamaran, by dropping through the hole, walking along the ledge (destroying the machine-gun emplacement you find there) and then dropping down behind the fence. Simply follow the coastline left until you find your ship.

Made-To-Measure Mutants

Drop through the hole and talk to the elephant sitting on the dock. Head right, kill the red Grobo with your ball of power and enter the shuttle building. Walk in calmly and talk to the green Grobo. He'll activate the underground shuttle for you, so walk around to the gate and drop down onto the shuttle when it opens.

When the shuttle arrives at the factory, head right and kill the white-coated scientist before he can sound the alarm. Knock out the robot rabbit, head round the corner and then destroy all the mutants on the lab tables. When they're dead, head left and destroy all the green eggs in the pit — watch the way that the eggs move in the pit and how they react to the ball when it's thrown, then adjust your shooting accordingly.

When you've got them all (the screen will flash red if you have), run back through the lab with the tables and through the tunnel at the top of the screen. In the next location, walk into the control room and kill the guard you encounter there. The control panel has three levers: the one nearest the door opens it, so yank that one first. Next use the middle lever twice, leave the control room and then drop down off the ledge. When you land, run like crazy to avoid the mutant hiding below and escape through the open door.

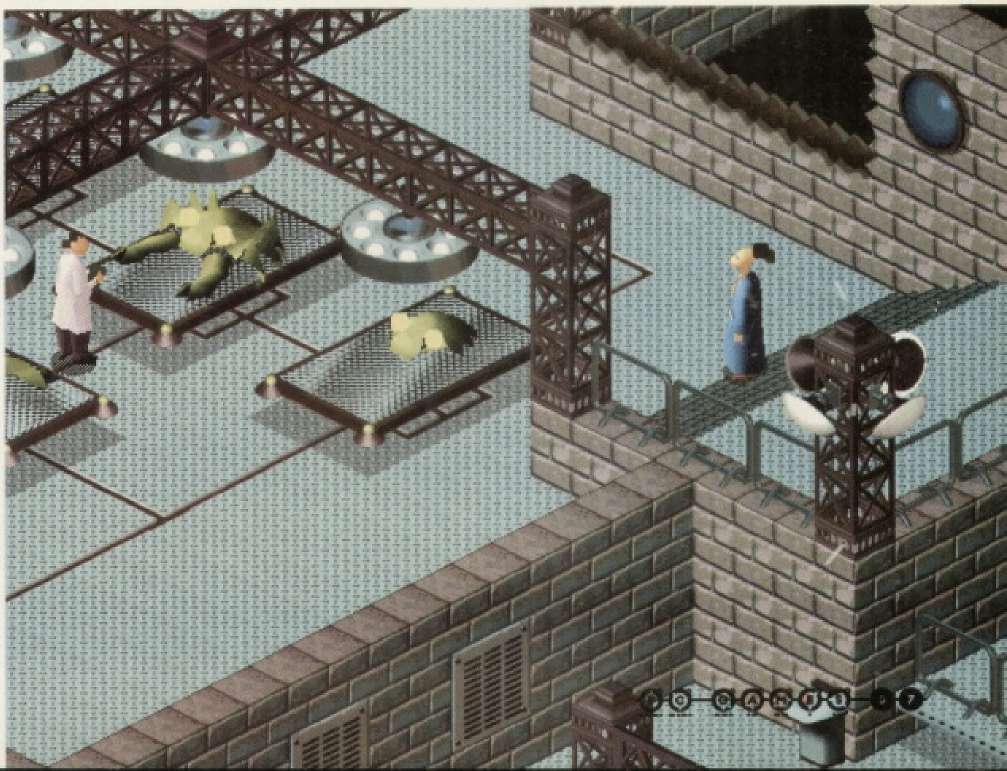
Either ignore or kill the mutant, replenish your gas supply using the nearest fuel can and jump into the buggy to get back to the Rabbibunny village. Walk towards the soup pot again to attract the rabbit's attention and he will lead you to the sacred carrot. Walk through the hole and out onto the coast, then head left and run along the dock. Kill the guard at the gate and then head up the steps, destroying another three guards as you go. Cross over the bridge and discover that you need a blue keycard to open the gate. Say 'Bugger!' very loudly and retrace your steps back to the catamaran.

A Little Elf Help

As I mentioned earlier, to get back to the catamaran, head back through the carrot, drop down the secret hole to get to the shuttle building, but walk along the ledge, etc, etc. When you eventually find your boat, set sail for the White Leaf Desert and use Gawley's Horn on the 'S' symbol in the rockface. Navigate the simple maze and talk to the Elf. In return for setting him free, he'll give you a blue card which gives you membership of the Elf Club for life.

Before you head back to the Hamalayi, sail back to Proxima Island again to get a magic flute. Using the yellow bike and the green buggy, visit the two runic stones. Drive to the Marked stone first (use the Horn to break the 'S' seal) and then to the Eclipse stone where you will find the magic flute.

With the flute safely in your manly grasp, head back to the Hamalayi mountains and make your way back to the locked gate by following the coastline around, and then killing the guard to open the gate in the fence. Make your way back to the keycard-operated door and open it. Kill at least one guard



You've just found a Magic Flute.

to get a key, then drop down the ladder and get rid of the nasty red Grobo.

Just around the corner from here is the Clearwater Lake. Ignore the boat for a moment, nip round to the lake and use the flute on it. After the cutscene, fill your empty bottle with water to reach the fourth level of magic. Finally, hop into the boat and head for Tippet Island.

Play That Funky Music...

Tippet Island is a collection of underground caverns. When you arrive, talk to everyone and stock up on provisions in the shop behind the first door. Talk to the rabbit in the flared white trousers to learn about the Cloning and Teleportation centres. Open the metal gate at the top of the screen and head into the Twinsun bar by running past the two nasty-looking elephants.

Talk to the dejected rabbit on stage and then talk to the barman. There's a secret passageway in the bar, but to open it you're going to need to find a guitar for the band. Luckily, the old rabbit in the White Leaf Desert has one.

Head back to the White Leaf Desert and give the flute to the old Rabbibunny. In return, he will give you his space guitar. Sail back to the Hamalayi again and return to Tippet Island using the Hydroboat. Give the space guitar to the band and talk to the barman again. Drop down the secret passageway that he opens for you. Make your way carefully through the tunnels until you emerge at the top of a hill. Talk to the Dino-Fly and then clamber on it to fly to Fortress Island.

At Fortress Island talk to all the Rabbibunnies and you'll learn that they will dig a tunnel into the Fortress if you can knock out the Teleportation Centre. Okay, no problem — you are a hero after all. But to destroy the Centre, you're going to have to find the plans for it, so head back to Tippet Island and ask the Groboclone about them. For 50 Kashes, he'll reveal that the plans are in Funfrock's safe on Principal Island.

Rampant Destruction

Sail back to Principal Island and, as you have both the red and the blue keycard, break into the heavily-defended fortress. Once inside, free the Rabbibunny (who tells you about an escape route) and then wander into Dr Funfrock's office. Funfrock will laugh evilly, shoot his own Groboclone guard and teleport away, leaving you to free the elephant in the cell and to open the safe. Unfortunately, however, the plans have been moved. It turns out that the architect (who lives next to your house on Citadel Island) has taken them home.

Head back to Citadel Island and talk to the architect. He will give you his security pass. Once you have this, make the long journey to Brundle Island. Sneak into the Teleportation Centre using the architect's pass and, once inside, locate the row of teleports and jump on each of them to blow them up.

Finally, jump on the control panel to complete the spectacular destruction of the centre. To escape from the building, jump over the broken wall at the bottom of the screen and drop down from Funfrock's statue. Leave the building and go back to Fortress Island.

With the teleports destroyed, wander into the fortress and dispose of the guards and the tank using your multi-purpose ball of power. The rabbit will then dig a tunnel into the fortress for you as he promised earlier. Once you have made it inside the building, free Zoe from her jail cell. Unfortunately, Zoe turns out to be a robot clone and you are then captured by Dr Funfrock. Like any good dictator, Funfrock will helpfully tell you the rest of the plot, before dumping you in a prison cell to rot for all eternity.

The cell is practically identical to the one at the beginning of the game, and you can escape from it using the same tactic. Recover your belongings from the locker and head towards the cloning room. Dispose of as many robots as you can and then make your way to the far wall, where you'll find another one of Sendell's symbols. Use the Horn on the 'S' and jump into the hole that appears to find the third runic stone. Here you will learn the location of the Well Of Sendell and, hopefully, you'll find a powerful magical sword.

The Desperate Swordfight To The Death...

To escape from the cavern that hides the runic stone, use the flask of water on it. When you do this, the whole building will then explode in a nicely-drawn cutscene and you'll be left standing facing the ruins. But there's no time to waste. Head back into the ruins and exit the screen into the construction site.

In the construction site, wander around until you find a green Grobo. Talk to him to get the key to the unused bulldozer, then use the bulldozer to move the boulders that block the way north. Follow the path around, dodging the soldiers, workmen and the vehicles until you get to a gate. Open the gate and wander towards the Well Of Sendell itself.

The Well is located on top of a huge mountain of green rock, and after killing the three workers that are drilling on it, climb up the rock to find Funfrock and Zoe. Battle Funfrock with the magical sword until you force him off the edge of the rock. Then talk to Zoe and jump down to the Well.

When you reach the bottom, Funfrock will appear again, so attack him again and again with the sword until you defeat him. Finally, wander into the darkness to see the final cutscene and the tear-jerking ending...

STARDUST

Super Edition

Get
Sucked
In!

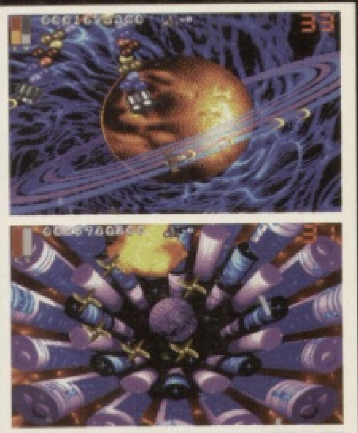
Stardust Super Edition is now available for the PC, and boy - was it worth the wait!

"One hell of a game" Games Master

The tunnels are mind blowing...its a fierce game" C&VG

Universally acclaimed as the all time classic shoot-em-up, Stardust is a shamelessly brilliant interpretation of the original Asteroids game. Featuring 4 amazing 3D warp tunnels and sheer white-nuckle, joystick gripping action, this is the shoot-em-up PC gamers have long deserved.

Let your enthusiasm be born again!



Out Feb 7th
RRP £24.99

cheat lab

Welcome. Yes, welcome to the round-off-the-end-of-the-section tips page. Need some combat hints for Wing Commander 3? How about unlimited ammo and invulnerability in Desert Strike? Well, don't just sit there gawping, read on, dear gamer, read on...

Desert Strike

Gremlin Interactive

If you're having problems with your high-tech chopper in Gremlin's superb Desert Strike, worry not. Steve McKevitt from Sheffield is about to reveal a nifty little cheat that allows you to skip levels and make your Apache helicopter completely invulnerable.

Simply access the options screen and type WATERFALL. Once you've done this, hit the F12 key to toggle invulnerability and unlimited weapons on/off. Also, try taking off, pressing Q and then landing again which allows you to skip levels without having to complete all the missions. Cheers again Steve.

Rise Of The Robots

Mirage

Every good beat-'em up these days seems to have a variety bag of joystick-twisting special moves, and Rise of the Robots, the lavish SVGA beat-'em up from Mirage, is no exception. For starters, on the options screen, if you press the LEFT and RIGHT cursor keys repeatedly, you can pit the Military Robot against the Military Robot (this only works in the two-player game). Or, if you're battling the mechanical warriors on your own, press LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, RIGHT until the screen border turns blue and you'll be able to play the Supervisor robot in training. By the way, the Supervisor's secret moves are: DOWN, LEFT, UP, RIGHT (horrible insect-type move) and DOWN, RIGHT, UP, LEFT (melt).

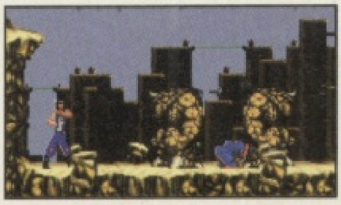
Blackthorne

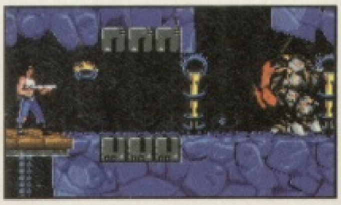
Interplay

It may be just another puzzle-based, shoot-'em up platform romp, but Interplay's Blackthorne is a tough game to crack. So, if you're mad in the Mines or tempestuous in the Trees, PC GAMES is proud to present the complete set of level codes...

Mine Level 2 — FBWC
Mine Level 3 — QP7R
Mine Level 4 — WJTV
Tree Level 1 — RRYB
Tree Level 2 — ZS9P
Tree Level 3 — XJSN
Tree Level 4 — CGDM
Sand Level 1 — TJ1F

Sand Level 2 — GSG3
Sand Level 3 — BMHS
Sand Level 4 — Y4DJ
Castle Level 1 — HCKD
Castle Level 2 — NRLF
Castle Level 3 — J6BZ
Castle Level 4 — MJXG
Castle Level 5 — K3CH





Quarantine

Gametek

Life is tough on the streets and if you're a futuristic taxi driver you've got to have a witty line in chat and a finely-honed killer instinct. But if you're a little meeker and milder than you're average death-dealing cabbie, then why not try out these level codes for Gametek's vehicular Doom-clone...

The Park	Omnicorp is all knowing
Old Kemo	Keep the oppressor oppressing
Projects	The meek shall inherit zilch
Wharf	Have you had your hydergine today
Outside Kemo	Kemo city is a nice place to visit

Lands Of Lore

Virgin

In the January issue, David Allen was hopelessly stuck in Lands Of Lore, but thankfully, Tony Shek from Edinburgh, has leapt boldly to his rescue. So, if you can't get past Scotia's barriers in Upper Opinwood and that door in the Mines on level 4 (it's all gobbledegook to me) then all will be revealed below. Take it away Tony...

The door that you are stuck at must be completed last because it's Paulson's hideout. He will freely join your merry band and together you'll fight the evil hordes of Scotia. Paulson will give you a Vaelen's Cube to destroy the barrier, but to do all this you must first find the other key.

At mines level 1, remember that there were two wheel switches and a wall button. Try a combination of the switches and press the button round the corner. If you've got it right, a teleporter will appear to your left — this teleporter will either take you back to the beginning or transport you to a different part of the mines. From here on in the puzzles are fairly easy, but try to make sure that your fighter and magic levels are up to scratch. You have been warned...

Wing Commander 3

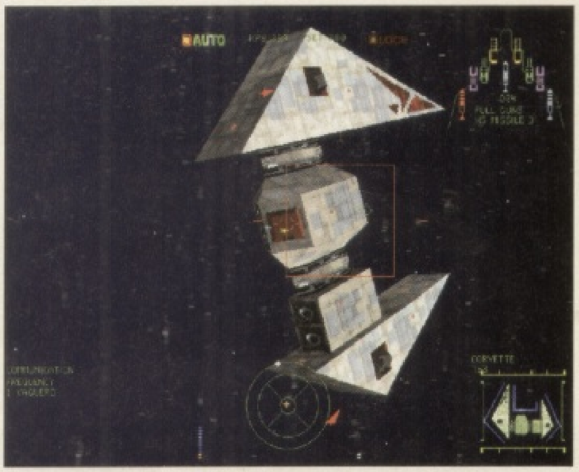
Origin

As long as you've got a Pentium, Origin's stunning interactive space opera is one of the hottest games around. Like the other Wing Commander outings, WC3 has the usual mix of cinematic talkie bits and frantic 3D space combat, but if you and old Mark Hamill are still struggling against the Kilrathi, here are a few tips that might make life in the space-lanes that tiny bit easier.

Firstly, if you find yourself flying against a Kilrathi Corvette and you've got no missiles left, simply crank the engine up to maximum speed and make several passes over the ship, blasting at its gun turrets. You'll notice as you approach that the turrets have yellow target boxes around them, and once you've blown up all the guns, the Corvette will be defenceless and is easily destroyed.

But if you think the Corvettes are a nuisance, the cloaked Strakas are an absolute pain. The best way to track these ships is to lock onto the nearest one and then to use the yellow ITTS targeting sight to direct you to them as they de-cloak. Luckily, the Strakas aren't particularly sturdy, so don't waste your missiles — instead, switch to full guns and blow them apart.

Lastly, if you find any mission particularly impossible, you can skip past it by ejecting. As long as you've destroyed a few enemy ships along the way, you'll be picked up and shuttled back to the Victory. The captain will whinge at you, but the plot will advance regardless. This works best in the early stages of the game, but don't try it too often. Later in the game, failing to complete a mission may well send you down the 'lose' path, where you will eventually, er, lose. Funny that.



cheat lab Interactive

Atomic batteries to power. Turbines to speed. Gaming brains enabled. Gaming Brains on-line. Downloading Cheat Lab Interactive data...

Dear Cheat Lab,

I'm stuck in Monkey Island 2. I'm in the tunnels underneath Dinky island and I'm trying to escape from LeChuck by making a voodoo doll of him. I have come out onto the street above, but the street is blocked by a barrier. How do I get past it? I would also like to know how to get the body part for the LeChuck doll. I have something of the dead, thread and head but how do I make the doll?

Joe Bailey,
Martock.

Right. You should have the voodoo doll, the balloon, a skull, the surgical gloves and the syringe. In the vending machine room, use the gloves and the balloon on the helium cylinder. Use the coin return on the Grog machine. When LeChuck appears and bends to pick up the coin, grab his underwear. If you've also got LeChuck's beard (by trapping it in the elevator), give LeChuck the hanky and then put the hanky, the skull, the underpants, the beard and the doll into the Ju-Ju bag and you'll create a voodoo doll of LeChuck. Use the syringe on the doll when LeChuck appears and when the pirate staggers off, follow him to find the treasure of Big Whoop! Oh, and as for the street and the barrier, you can't get past it. You're not supposed to.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I'm only 10 and I'm quite pleased with how far I have got in Simon the Sorcerer. But just recently I have been stuck. I know that if you get the mahogany you can use the woodworm to eat through the floorboards and then get the staff. But I can't find out how to get the mahogany. Please tell me how to get it and save me from serious punishment from my older brother who is just as anxious as me.

Alex,
Etchinghill, Kent.

Okay. This will be a bit long-winded, but bear with me. The block of mahogany lies inside the woodcutters hut and to get inside you've got to have made the magical axe-head. To do this, pick up the interesting rock (the one that has a fossil in it, not the one with Beer chalked on the bottom) and use the metal detector in the icy wastes to locate the Milrith deposit. Take the fossil rock to the blacksmith and use it on the anvil. Then take the fossil to the archaeologist and give it to him. He'll move his dig site to the icy wastes and dig up the Milrith for you. Grab the ore, nip back to the smithy and use the ore on the anvil to make the axe-head. With the axe-head, nip back to the woodcutter, give him the magical blade and go inside his house. Use the fire extinguisher (found in the dragon's cave) on the fire and pull the lever in the fireplace. You'll then descend into the wood store...

Dear Cheat Lab,

If it's not too much trouble I would be extremely happy and grateful if you could please, please, please, please, include a walkthrough for Police Quest 3. I always get stuck in the same place in the game.

Douglas Grayland,
New Zealand.

Thanks for your letter Doug and I'll have a hunt around for a PQ3 solution. In the meantime if you're completely stuck, drop us a line telling us exactly where you having problems and we'll endeavour to help you out.

Dear Cheat Lab,

Please help me. I'm stuck on Sam and Max Hit The Road. I think you are meant to do something at the Circus hut but I can't get past the fire-breathing man.

Simon Chapman,
Little Milton, Oxon.

No problem, Simon. Hopefully, when you came out of Sam's office, you encountered a small black and white cat. Use Max on the cat and he'll stick his hand down the cat's throat to pull out the duos secret orders. Simply give these orders to the fire-breather (use orders with fire-breather) to gain entry into the Circus.

Dear Cheat Lab,

In the game Little Big Adventure, I have a problem on Fortress Island. After completely destroying the teleportation centre, I have met Zoe (who turned out to be a robot), escaped from prison and found the last Runic Stone. Unfortunately I can't get out. I've tried everything but I can't find an exit. Could you please tell me how to escape this room?

Mr A. Barkowski,
London.

I must admit that this room had me well and truly stumped when I came across it. Like you, I tried everything. I hit the stone with my sword, threw balls at it, jumped at every bit of wall, everything... However, the one thing I didn't try was using the flask of water on the stone. Just stand in front of it and activate the flask. Everything will explode and you can progress onto the next part of the game.

Stuck in an adventure?
Do you know any hot tips for todays top PC games?

If the answer to either of these questions is "Yes" grab a postcard and send your tips or queries to us at: CHEAT LAB, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You never know, you might be lucky enough to win a software prize.

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT!

PC GAMES can not be held responsible for loss of data or for the tips failing to work properly or for anything strange and bizarre that might happen to you and your PC within the next 2,654 years. You use these tips at your own risk. If anything goes wrong it's your fault. Not ours. Just wanted to make that bit clear, okay?

WIN

A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF

KETCHUP!*

*Well, a couple of bottles of Heinz, anyway!

Yup, it's true — you can be the proud owner of a cupboard full of red sauce thanks to those wacky bods at Psygnosis! Perfect for adding flavour to those oh-so-bland early morning fry-ups, tomato ketchup is great with bangers and mash, fish and chips... hey, it's even tasty on Cornish pasties! Anyway, there's also a load of Gravis soundcards up for grabs, as well as five runners-up prizes of Novastorm, which features the totally screwy secret level which has turned Psygnosis tomato crazy!

HOW TO ENTER

See the questions elsewhere on the page? Yes? Read them carefully, then ignore common sense and randomly pluck an answer for each of them.

Scrawl your answers on a postcard or on the back of a sealed envelope, along with your name and address, and send it to: Ooh, Saucy! Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Oh, all entries must be received by the 6th of March.

Why? Because on that date the winner will be drawn from a hat by someone not at all famous, using the 'B' set of balls and Albert the lottery machine. If you manage to match one answer correctly, you get, um, nothing. Get two questions right and, again, you win bugger all. However, answers all three correctly and you have the chance to win a prize which will change your life (or at least the taste of your pork sausages).

THE QUESTIONS

1. What is a tomato? Is it a...
   (a) A fruit
   (b) A vegetable
   (c) A mineral

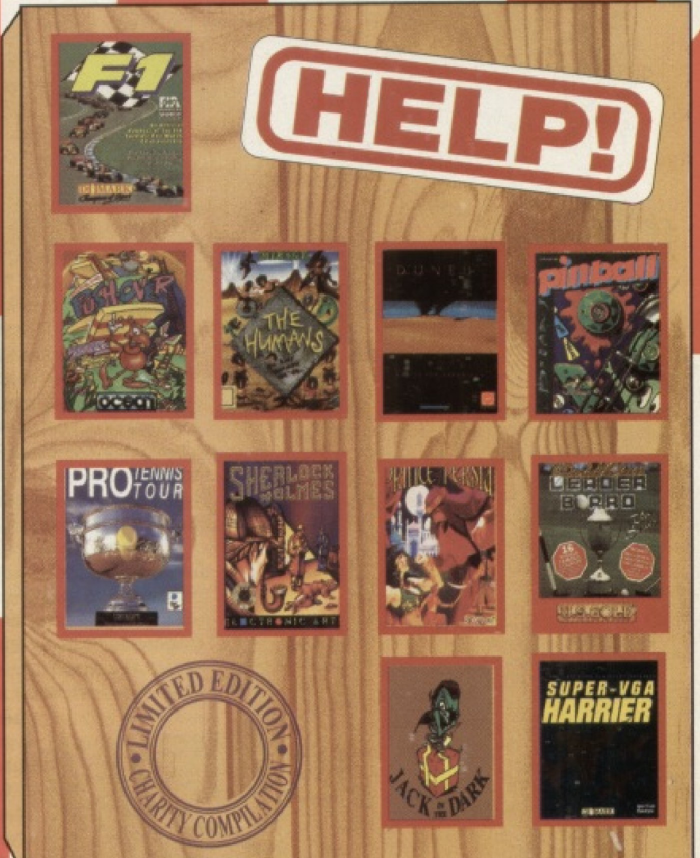
2. How many varieties of Heinz are there?
   (a) 57
   (b) 2,365
   (c) 1

3. What word do you enter on the first level of Novastorm to enter the tomato cheat?
   (a) Potatoes
   (b) Tomatoes
   (c) Kumquats

This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images or Psygnosis, or any of their friends or relatives, so there! The competition closes on the 6th of March 1995, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered, the Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into (so don't phone up and moan if you don't win!). While every care is taken, we cannot accept any responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. Sorry.

A LITTLE HELP GOES A LONG WAY

Sensible Soccer
European Champions
HELP!
The Humans
Pushover
ocean
Road Rash
Electronic Arts
Cool Spot
Desert Strike
Electronic Arts
LIMITED EDITION
CHARITY COMPILATION


F1
HELP!
Pushover
ocean
The Humans
Dune
Pinball
Pro Tennis Tour
Sherlock Holmes
Electronic Arts
Prince of Persia
Leader Board
Jack in the Dark
Super-VGA Harrier
LIMITED EDITION
CHARITY COMPILATION

LIMITED EDITION
CHARITY COMP

Available for Amiga PC CD ROM
at all
Computer stores now

All proceeds to charity, Including ChildLine and the Prince's Trust.

DR SPANNER'S CASEBOOK

He's showed you how to install everything bar the kitchen sink and Dr Spanner returns once again to guide you through the perils of the PC hardware jungle. So sit back, relax and listen up as Dr Spanner reveals his top three...

DR SPANNER
ON CALL

SOUNDCARDS

CHOOSING YOUR NEW SOUNDCARD

Most of the advice you're given when buying a Hi-Fi applies equally as well to buying a soundcard. For a start, the sound quality gets better the more cash you part with — no surprises there. What you have to decide is whether there's enough of a difference in quality between a £100 card and a £150 card to make it worth your while — it's all a very personal thing.

At the bottom of the scale are the 8-bit FM cards. These are pretty much obselete, but make a passable noise if you're only after the basics and don't want to spend more than £60 or so.

Next step up are the 16-bit FM cards. And they sound, well, twice as good as 8-bit cards and, to be honest, they should be more than enough to satisfy the needs of most gameplayers.

At the top of the pile we have wavetable soundcards. Wavetable cards make a nicer, cleaner noise than FM, but they also cost more and they aren't always that well-supported by games.

But before you rush out and splash the cash, there are a couple of things to remember. Games tend to support a few of the best known cards, i.e Sound Blaster. Other cards have to make do with a spot of emulating (or faking it...). So if you're not sure, play safe and go for the card you see listed most often.

Enjoy The Widest Software Support
SB-2770
Sound
VALUE EDITION
BLASTER
16
CREATIVE

Also, if you're only going to use the soundcard for playing games, then with the more expensive cards you're paying for a lot of features you don't need (music sampling stuff, mostly). But try these babies anyway...

The top three...

1. Sound FX Classic 3000

RRP £149 — Bluepoint (0908) 277007

Last year, Bluepoint stormed into the soundcard market with the rather nifty classic 3000, a 16-Bit soundcard that boldly undercut the prices of both the Sound Blaster AWE32 and the Ultrasound Max. To add insult to injury, the Sound FX also seemed to produce a better quality sound than both of them and, with some glowing reviews in the specialist press, it suddenly became a popular and affordable wavetable card that also had a good and reliable FM synthesizer for Sound Blaster emulation.

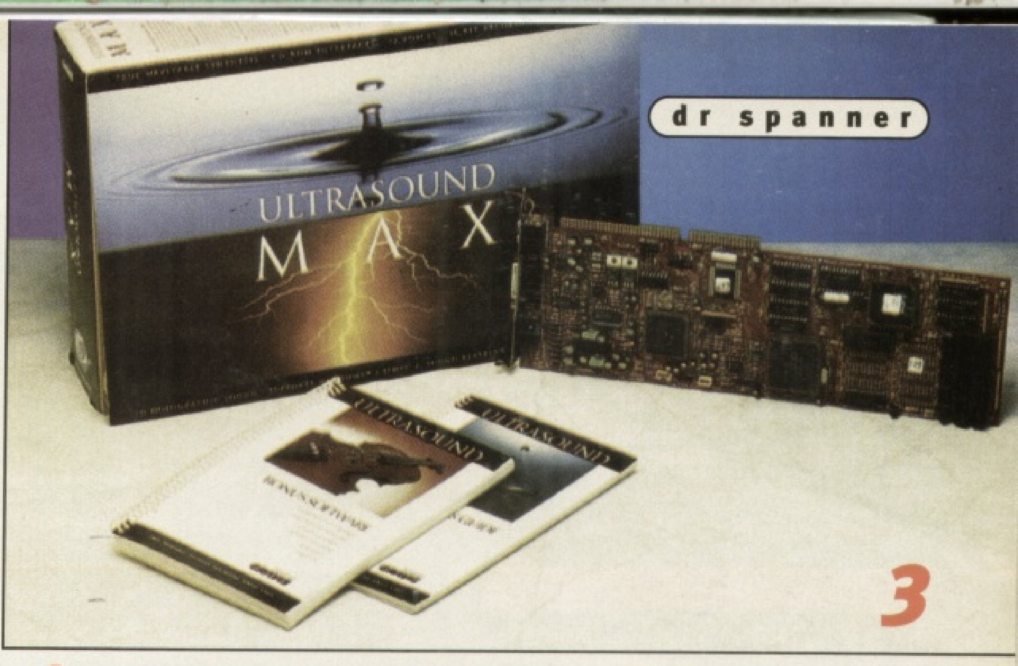
The Sound FX offers a combination of good, solid FM emulation and some cracking MIDI sound quality. Unlike the Gravis card, the Sound FX uses PCM wavetable technology which means that the card uses built-in hardware to produce the sound rather than memory-hungry software emulators. As a result, the MIDI sound is excellent and comparable to the AWE32 in every respect. Better still, the Sound FX has very few software drivers to clutter up your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files, so running memory-intensive games is never a problem.

But while the Sound Blaster emulation is solid and reliable, it does unfortunately suffer somewhat due to the lack of a dedicated Sound Blaster Pro function. This basically means that while the AWE32 can offer 16-Bit stereo sound, the poor old Sound FX is stuck with 8-Bit mono emulation. And if there's one thing that lets the card down, it's this.

But that aside, the Classic 3000 is a very versatile and above all, a very cheap sound card. Since I've been using it, I've had no problems whatsoever.

OBSESSION
UNIVERSE
H2O

THE NEXT GENERATION PC SOUND STANDARD
SB-2760
2



3

Every game that I've installed runs with it perfectly and for this reason alone, I'd happily recommend it to anyone. Overall, the Sound FX is excellent value for money and with its PCM wavetable features and top-quality sound reproduction, it qualifies automatically for the top three shortlist.

PCG Rating: ● ● ● ●

2. Sound Blaster AWE32

RRP £249 — Creative Labs (0743) 284590

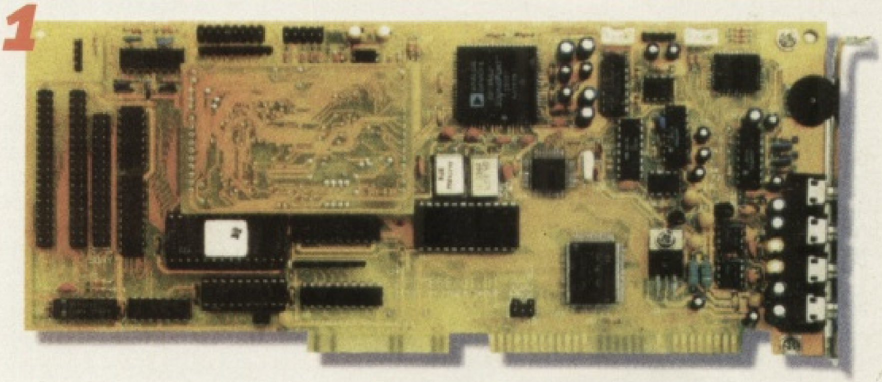
The latest export from the Creative Labs stable is the Sound Blaster AWE32, a turbo-charged Sound Blaster 16 which produces what is probably the best all-round sound output on the PC. In fact, if you're interested in writing and composing music then the AWE32 is absolutely perfect, but if you're not, the AWE32 is a wavetable card which uses General MIDI sound for stereo music and a Sound Blaster 16 emulation for those all-important stereo sound effects. In short, it's great. But as it costs around £250, it bloody well ought to be.

In terms of technology, the AWE32 isn't a huge leap forward from the old SB16. However, if you do eventually shell out for one, you can sleep soundly with the knowledge that with an AWE32 in your machine you're guaranteed total compatibility with every single PC game that has been released or is going to be released this year. To be honest, this 'compatibility' factor is potentially the most important thing about the AWE32 card and while it's perhaps a touch pricey if you're just going to use it for games, the AWE32 is a good all-round card with some excellent 16-Bit digital sound capabilities.

Problems? Well, yes just a couple. Although the native Sound Blaster mode is very crisp and full, the General MIDI doesn't sound as clean and clear as the Sound FX 3000. Also, the AWE32 has over 40K of vital sound drivers which, compared to the the Sound FX 3000, is an absolute truckload. But above all, if you've got the spare cash, the AWE32 is a beautiful card that makes an impressive noise. As I mentioned earlier, it's a bit pricey if all you're going to do is play games with it, but if you fancy dabbling with composition later on, then it stands head and shoulders above the gathered soundcard crowd.

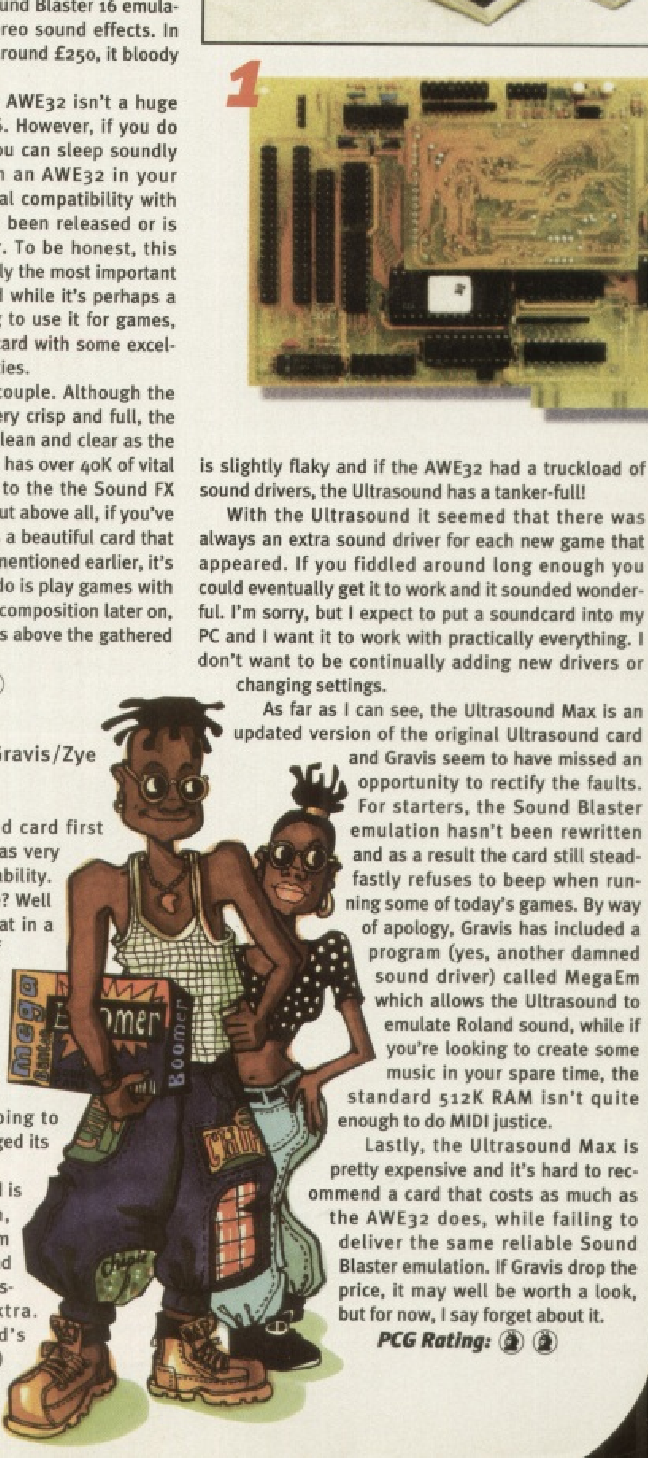
PCG Rating: ● ● ● ●

1



3. UltraSound Max

RRP £295 — Advanced Gravis/Zye Technology (0293) 538666



When the Gravis Ultrasound card first appeared, I must admit that I was very excited about its 3D sound capability. What? You didn't know it had one? Well it does. At the card's launch, I sat in a darkened room, wearing a pair of headphones, listening to virtual ducks as they flew over my left shoulder and disappeared into the distance. It was an impressive show and it convinced me that the Gravis Ultrasound was going to be a card that was going to make a splash when it finally barged its way into the soundcard market.

In native mode, the Ultrasound is unmatched. The sound is rich, clear and full (check out the Doom music if you don't believe me) and the 3D sound function is an impressive, if rarely supported, extra. Unfortunately, the Ultrasound's Sound Blaster emulation (SBOS) is slightly flaky and if the AWE32 had a truckload of sound drivers, the Ultrasound has a tanker-full!

With the Ultrasound it seemed that there was always an extra sound driver for each new game that appeared. If you fiddled around long enough you could eventually get it to work and it sounded wonderful. I'm sorry, but I expect to put a soundcard into my PC and I want it to work with practically everything. I don't want to be continually adding new drivers or changing settings.

As far as I can see, the Ultrasound Max is an updated version of the original Ultrasound card and Gravis seem to have missed an opportunity to rectify the faults. For starters, the Sound Blaster emulation hasn't been rewritten and as a result the card still steadfastly refuses to beep when running some of today's games. By way of apology, Gravis has included a program (yes, another damned sound driver) called MegaEm which allows the Ultrasound to emulate Roland sound, while if you're looking to create some music in your spare time, the standard 512K RAM isn't quite enough to do MIDI justice.

Lastly, the Ultrasound Max is pretty expensive and it's hard to recommend a card that costs as much as the AWE32 does, while failing to deliver the same reliable Sound Blaster emulation. If Gravis drop the price, it may well be worth a look, but for now, I say forget about it.

PCG Rating: ● ●

DR SPANNER *RECOMMENDS*

Buying a soundcard is a matter of personal taste, but below I've listed my favourite cards. They're grouped according to price but prices change so call the manufacturers to check...

Cheap 'n' Cheerful

Sound Blaster Pro
Creative Labs ● (0743) 248590 ● £79
An old faithful — it sounds okay(ish) and is the closest thing you'll get to a standard on the PC.

Middle Of The Road

Sound Blaster 16
Creative Labs ● (0743) 248590 ● £99
A solid FM soundcard, which can be upgraded to wavetable sound with an add-on.

Orchid GameWave
Orchid ● (0256) 479898 ● £149
Cut-down version of the SoundWave 32 that offers game-players excellent value for money.

Sound FX Classic 3000
Bluepoint ● (0908) 277007 ● £149
With FM *and* wavetable it can take on more expensive cards with ease. Highly recommended, but it could do with a Sound Blaster Pro emulation for games.

An Arm And A Leg

Orchid SoundWave 32
Orchid ● (0256) 479898 ● £199
Top-quality wavetable sound, very hard to trip up with games but limited CD support

Sound Blaster AWE32
Creative Labs ● (0743) 248590 ● £249
The new top-of-the-range Sound Blaster. Impressive, but it's too early to tell how stable it is yet.

Advanced Gravis UltraSound Max
Zye Technology ● (0293) 538666 ● £295
Sounds absolutely fabulous, darling — it even has 3D sound. Can still be temperamental at times, though.

TROUBLESHOOTER

THE TROUBLE SHOOTER

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine. And if you've got a technical problem, I've got a not-so- technical solution. That's why they call me...

This month, Hopeful of Harrogate writes: **"Okay, I've finally decided. My 386SX has got to go and I want to buy a new PC for games. Is it worth going for a Pentium so it will last longer? Or would a 66MHz 486DX be nearly as fast?"**

The first thing you should do when you think about buying a new PC is to decide what you want to do with it. And be honest! If what you want to do is play games, then you'll need to allow for gamesy things like a soundcard and maybe a joystick. So don't buy a business-orientated machine if all you really want to do is play Wing Commander 3.

Well, obviously I want to play games. But I'd like a PC that will let me do other things as well — like join the Internet, or graphics stuff.

Everyone *always* says "graphics stuff". But basically, you reckon you're looking for a games PC and you'd like to add a modem to it for Internet access, but perhaps not immediately. Correct?

Correct.

The sort of thing you buy for that should be fine for, er, "graphics stuff" as well. The next thing you need to do is work out how much you can afford to spend. Do you have a a bit of a stash right now? Do you want to find a store with a 'Buy now, Pay later' scheme? Have you got a credit card with some available credit on it?

I was thinking of paying by credit card. But what's this 'Buy now, Pay later' thing?

Some stores have a scheme whereby you can pay for your PC in instalments — I know PC World and Tempo do this, if you live near either of these outlets. It's quite handy — you pay a deposit for the PC, take it home, and pay the rest in monthly instalments. It's all subject to your credit status, of course, but it can all be sorted out in the shop at the time.

There's a small disadvantage to this, of course, in that you have to buy a PC stocked by the shop in question. You might be paying interest on the instalments and it might be cheaper in terms of total cost to buy elsewhere — if you can do it in one lump sum. You see, the third thing you need to do is to have a good look around at all the PCs available. Try them out if you possibly can, and you'll get a feel for the brand you like best, or which extras are most attractive. Always — *always* — ask about the extras.

I was looking in a shop the other day and they had some Pentium PCs for around £1,500. That sounds really good, but I heard on the radio that there was a fault with the Pentium. Is it safe to buy?

Bet you anything you like that if it's £1,500, it doesn't include VAT — and the VAT would take it up to nearer £1,800. Even so, Pentium PCs *are* coming down in price very fast.

Now, about this fault. What Intel, the manufacturer, has discovered is that the Pentium can produce 'a reduction in precision between the 5th and the 19th significant digits'. And what this *means* is that occasionally, in some hugely complex sums, it might get the answer wrong.

Sounds scary. Does that mean programs won't run properly?

It's certainly very embarrassing for Intel, but you needn't worry. The fault isn't really likely to affect home owners, unless you're doing very complicated scientific or engineering work, and besides, the versions that Intel is currently shipping out have all been fixed. It's worth asking in the shop, though, if only just to see the look on the assistant's face.

Still, you said £1,800, and that's a bit above my budget. Is the extra power really worth it?

What you might like to do is to have a good look at just how much of a new PC you need. If you already have a soundcard, a joystick, or even possibly an SVGA monitor that you're perfectly happy with, you could try buying a PC *without* these things in it and transfer your old ones. Then you could put the money you save towards a machine with more memory, or a higher-rated processor.

Anyway, I'm going to stick my neck out here and say that if you can afford a Pentium, then buy one. Before I played Wing Commander 3, I'd have said, nah, don't worry, save your money, get a really fast 486DX. But Wing 3 is so slow on a 486 and so wonderful on a Pentium — and I have a nasty suspicion that there'll be more games like it out later this year.

Oh God, it's not exactly a cheap business, buying PCs, is it?

I'm afraid not. Look, let me tell you what else you need apart from just the processor, and then you can decide whether it's worth coughing up even more for the Pentium chip.

- You need 8Mb of RAM, or system memory. If you buy a PC with 4Mb, you'll only want to put more memory in within three months.
- You need a big, big hard disk, at least 250Mb and as much more as you can afford. You need a colour monitor capable of displaying SVGA graphics.
- You need a CD-ROM drive (double speed at least) — yes, you really do these days, because this year *everything's* coming out on CD.
- You'd be stupid not to buy a soundcard if you don't already have one.
- A mouse, DOS and Windows should all come with the PC.

And if you can't afford a Pentium, just shrug your shoulders, buy a good, solid, fast (66Mhz) 486 and congratulate yourself on saving money.

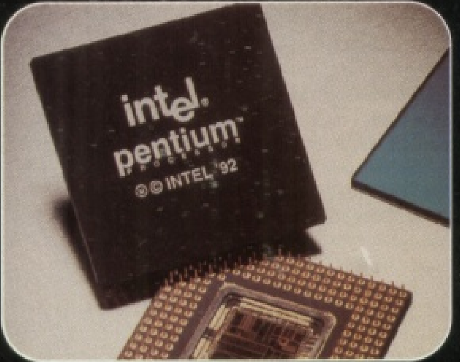
Oh, and get a machine with two serial ports — one for your mouse and one for that modem. Or get an internal modem.

And where's the best place to buy that sort of specification?

Three main places. The big stores with their pay-by-instalments offers are nice safe places to buy if you don't know too much about PCs and just want a good brand name. Your local independent computer store will probably be great for service and advice and finding a PC to suit you specifically, but it may not be able to deliver a really sharp price. By mail order, or selling direct from advertisements, you can get great prices, but you'll be buying a bit blind and it's all a bit anxious if you're not too sure about it. None of them are perfect, so you'll have to decide which is best for you.

Ask your mates. Buy one of your techie friends a pint and set him off on the pros and cons of PC manufacturers for three hours. By the end of that he'll probably be offering to fit you up with one himself (turn him down unless he really is your best friend, and systems manager at IBM to boot).

But whatever you do, don't rush it. Gather up as much information as you possibly can, get a good idea of the spec you need, and the price you simply can't exceed, and ask questions, questions, questions until your mouth falls off. Good luck!



Ah — another poor soul released from torment. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the TroubleShooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

Write us a letter. Go on — do it now! And then send it to Dave the Editor at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Alternatively, go 'Cyber' and fax him on: (0171) 972 6710, or e-mail him at: PCREVIEW@CIX.COMPULINK.CO.UK.

LETTERS

STARLETTER

DEVOTED...

Dear PC GAMES,

Ever since the first issue of PC Games came out, I have been buying it (Yes, even that very special first edition). The cover disks on each issue have simply been superb. Except for the last edition. The reason? There weren't any.

As usual, I trundled off to the newsagent to buy my favourite mag, money jingling in hand, ready to purchase God's own magazine. In the shop, I picked up PC Games and to my horror, there were no disks decorating the front cover. Looking at the other two copies of PCG, I realised they didn't have the disks either. Trying to control myself, I politely asked the newsagent where the holy disks were and after much discussing, he finally came to the conclusion that 'they must 'ave been swiped'. A likely answer, I don't think.

I was presented with a tough decision. Should I a) Pay £3.95 for a magazine without disks b) buy another, inferior magazine or c) get my money back? There was only one realistic choice — buy PC Games, sadly missing its disks. And that only leaves one question. What happened to the disks? Remember, there were three magazines and all were without their floppy friends. What fool would take three sets of disks bearing the same demos. I don't know, so maybe you can shed some light on the problem?

Mike Smith,
Stockport, Cheshire.

We salute you, Mike Smith of Stockport. You are a dedicated reader of PC Games, and for that the two Daves, Dean and Alex wish to pass on their thanks. Without the likes of you, PC Games just wouldn't be possible. As for the disks, I'm afraid I'm going to have to side with your newsie and agree that the disks must have been stolen. There's no other possible explanation. Who knows, maybe they weren't stolen by one thieving git but by three of the little buggers!

Of course, there is a way to prevent this from happening in the near future. Why not subscribe to PC Games? That way, you can guarantee that a copy of your favourite read (complete with the disks!) will fly hot off the presses and through your letter box before it even hits the newstands!

SUPER *SUSPENSE!*

Dear PC GAMES,

In the depths of PC GAMES Issue 6 you mentioned the imminent release of 'Super TFX'. I already have TFX and like it a lot, but is it worth buying the Super version? I have to admit that I like the idea of dogfighting against my pals, because they're all total crap.

Please put an end to my suspense.

David McCraw,
Selkirk, Scotland.

Quite what DID plan to do with their TFX follow-up is currently undecided. Although originally intended as a mere data disk — first code-named TFXtra, then Super TFX — work on it has progressed so much that there's every chance it'll evolve into a full-blown sequel, TFX 2.

However, whatever it's called, it promises to be an absolute doozy. DID is promising an improved 3D engine (boasting the now mandatory Super VGA mode), a whole host of new weapons and campaign scenarios and, of course, network and modem/serial-link options to let you battle it out against your crappy mates.

Don't get too excited yet though — it's unlikely to appear before the Summer at the earliest. Rest assured, we should have more news for you soon.

LATE *(AGAIN!)*

Dear PC GAMES,

Why do you make promises you can't keep? In issue 3 of PC Games on the next month page, you said that Under A Killing Moon would be reviewed in issue 4, and it was nowhere to be seen. That's not all. On issue 4's next month page you claimed that you'd have reviews of Ecstatica, Creature Shock, KA-50 Hokum and (maybe) Wing Commander 3. In issue 5, none of them were there! What about the previews of Alone in the Dark 3 and US Navy Fighters as well? Tube was also missing from issue six. How could you lie to us, the wonderful PC Games readers? Please explain.

Marc Brown,
Ruislip, Middlesex.

There is a perfectly good explanation for why so many reviews slipped, but before I offer my humble apologies I'd just like to say it isn't our fault. Honest. A lot of the games on the PC are developed in America, and more often than not UK distributors don't know when a product will finally arrive until a week or so before they appear. What this basically means is that we are promised review copies of the game, but when it doesn't arrive in this country for some reason or another, we obviously can't feature the game until it finally turns up.

There are many reasons why a game doesn't ship on time, most of them unexpected delays like last minute testing and ironing out any imperfections (known as bugs). Obviously developers want their games to be perfect before they hands them over to cynical journos like ourselves, and will therefore spend days, possibly weeks checking their baby for any faults, even if it means the product arrives late. Unfortunately the problem is out of our hands, so all I can say is sorry. We try our best and at the time of going to press, we have every intention of including everything which is featured on the next month page. Probably.

YOU *SPANNER!*

Dear PC GAMES,

If there's one thing that I really hate doing, it's buying techie PC magazines when I'd much rather spend my money buying PC Games. Therefore, why doesn't PC Games have a technical help section where I can simply write in with my questions? To encourage you to create this section for minor problems, I include the very problem I'm facing.

In the November issue, Dr Spanner writes a brief summary about IDE CD-ROM drives. I am thinking of taking advantage of buying the Bluepoint ICD300 CD-ROM drive, but before I buy it I want a few questions answered. At the moment I have a 386DX 40 with 4Mb of RAM, a 512k video card and a SoundBlaster V2. If I buy the drive, do I need to buy a new soundcard (ie. a SoundBlaster 16) and will my crap video card slow down the drive's performance and make it fairly useless anyway? Oh, and what the hell does an IDE interface mean in terms that a non-technical wizard such as myself can understand.

Martin Green,
Holsworthy, Devon.

First things first. No, you shouldn't have to upgrade your soundcard and your video card won't affect the performance of your CD drive. The two are in no way connected. However, as you've probably noticed, more and more games are becoming processor hungry and as much as I hate to say it, many of the new releases just won't work on a 4Mb 386. In the near future, I suggest you upgrade your processor, this unfortunately being an unpleasantly expensive process. Look out for Dr Spanner, who returns in this very issue of PC Games, and will be batch-testing all sorts of hardware, starting with soundcards. In the near future, he'll be comparing the clutch of new Overdrive chips (which you'll need), Quad Speed CD-ROM drives, Virtual Reality helmets and possibly, um, that old magazine favourite, joysticks.

Lastly, the explanation of an IDE interface is simple. IDE stands for Intergrated Drive Electronics and what it basically means is that the CD-ROM drive will plug directly into your PC's IDE controller, rather than via a separate interface card. This therefore frees up a valuable expansion slot in the back of the machine, and it should also reduce the possibility of conflicting IRQ interrupts with your soundcard. I hope that explains some of the confusion.

CD *OR NOT* CD?

Dear PC GAMES,

I can see Imps point of view about the issue, 'CD's are utterly useless!'. However, CDs are easier and quicker to use. For example, I have Sherlock Holmes which consists of nine disks which take up a huge 28Mb when installed! It takes almost half an hour to install the lot so surely, bearing this in mind, it's obvious that a CD better option. Then again, what's to stop software manufacturers from producing the full game on CD, and then in the same box have a reduced floppy version. It might cost a little more, but then it will almost definitely appeal to owners of CD drives as well as those who still use floppy disks.

Kieron Ashley-Smith,
Caistor, Lincoln.

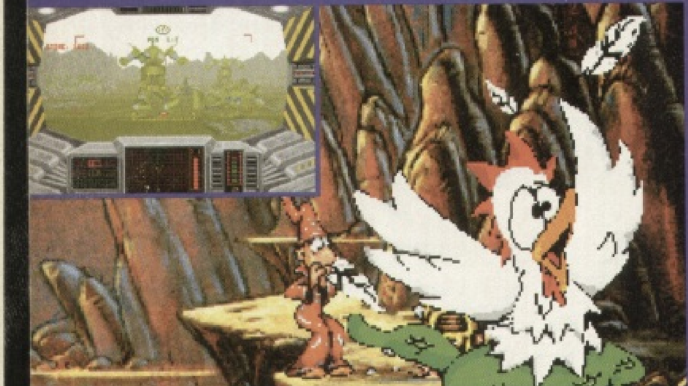
I'm sorry to disagree with you Kieron, but I think your idea of bundling floppy and CD versions of a game in one box is totally ludicrous. You're right, it does cost more — a hell of a lot more. It's more cost effective to produce a game on CD and disk, and then sell them separately. This, as you probably know, is the norm now, because why on Earth would someone want a CD version of a game if they've only got a floppy drive? Also, if you've just upgraded to a CD drive, why fork out more money on some floppy disks you didn't really want?

If you're lucky enough to own a CD-ROM drive, buying the CD version of a game often proves more convenient to use, as most games only copy the installation files to your drive rather than the complete game, so therefore you don't clutter up precious hard disk space.

NEXT MONTH

It's almost Valentine's Day, so what better way to prove your devotion to a loved one than by giving them next month's issue of PC GAMES. Apart from the usual informative reviews and ground-breaking features, there's also a special Lover's Guide for you and your PC* — inserting your floppy will never be the same again!

1. You want want reviews, we've got 'em! In next month's issue you can expect the low-down on Virgin's robotic stomper, IRON ASSAULT, the hilarious DISCWORLD and Sensible Software's return to the battlefield in CANNON FODDER 2.



Eh, you want more? No problem. These are but a few of the things stored inside the sacred pages of PC GAMES Issue 9, which will be packed full to the brim with even more exciting reviews, previews, features and tips than ever before. Okay, I know we always say this, but it'll be absolutely great. Honest.

SCREAM AT THE
UNSPEAKABLE TERRORS
OF THE DEEP

2. MicroProse take the plunge as the follow-up to one of '94's biggest strategy games, *UFO: TERROR OF THE DEEP*, is thrown under the spotlight and examined by the PC GAMES' team of cynics. We also dust off the DIY torture kit, wire the crocodile clips to the mains and interrogate MicroProse to find out just how *UFO 2* is shaping up.

3. We stowaway on-board the Starship Enterprise to take a sneaky peek at the potentially huge *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, then race around like madmen for Gremlin's futuristic racer, *SLIPSTREAM*.

Solve the unfolding mystery

* Only joking.

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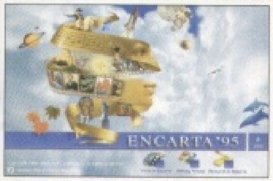

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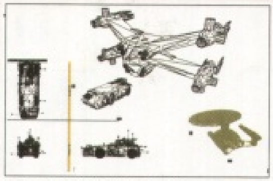

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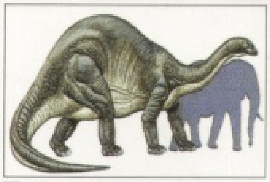

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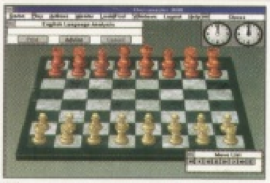

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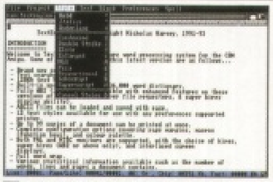

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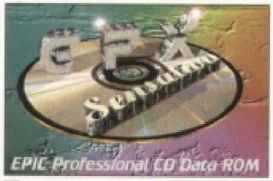

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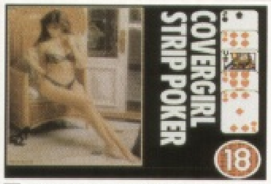

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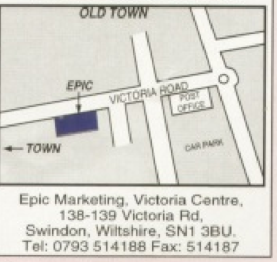

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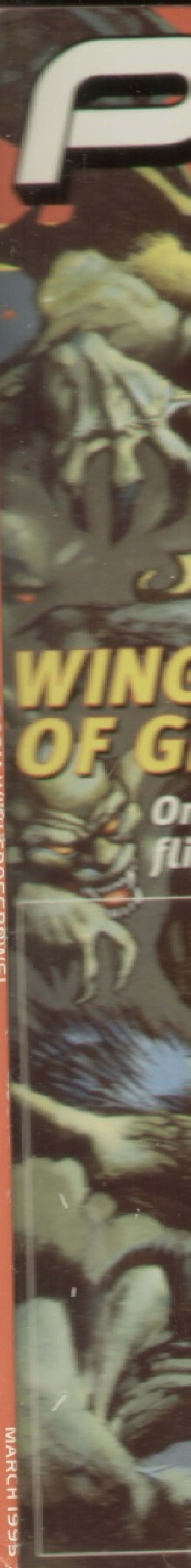
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